Hafa Adai!

Happy New Year!

Saipan Tribune

75¢

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

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2020 PERSON OF THE YEAR

Esther Muña

By JUSTINE NAUTA
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REPORTER

When the CNMI reopened its borders in May to let in returning residents who had been stranded in Guam due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. chief executive officer Esther Muña was always at the airport, together with other health care team members, to monitor the arrival of passengers and their transport to the quarantine facility.

See MUÑA on Page 4

SMALL BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

Majesty Restaurant

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

A restaurant that also gives away free food to anyone, no questions asked. That's Majesty Restaurant in Garapan.

This establishment has upended the standard business model for restaurants by also making it its mission to help the unemployed, those with reduced work hours, the low-income, and the homeless

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Volunteers from Mt. Carmel School and close friends of the Majesty Restaurant hand out bento boxes filled with food last week. NEIL FAMA

1st reported US case of COVID-19 variant found in Colorado

By PATTY NIEBERG
ASSOCIATED PRESS/REPORT FOR AMERICA

DENVER (AP)—The first reported U.S. case of the COVID-19 variant that's been seen in the United Kingdom has been discovered in Colorado, Gov. Jared Polis announced Tuesday, adding urgency to efforts to vaccinate Americans.

The variant was found in a man in his 20s who is in isolation southeast of Denver in Elbert County and has no travel history, state health officials said.

Elbert County is a mainly rural area of rolling plains at the far edge of the Denver metro area that includes a portion of Interstate 70, the state's main east-west highway.

Colorado Politics reported there is a second suspected case of the variant in the state according to Dwayne Smith, director of public health for Elbert County. Both of the people were working in the

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COMMUNITY VULNERABILITY

LEGEND:
- **Red:** Least safe
- **Orange**
- **Yellow**
- **Blue**
- **Green:** Safest

Source: Office of the Governor

AT A GLANCE

As of 6pm, Dec. 30, 2020

GUAM	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	7,293	15	7,308
Recovered	6,954	64	7,018
Active	154	15	169
Deaths	121	0	121
Cumulative Number of Persons Tested			101,407

SAIPAN	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	122	0	122
Traced via Travel Screening	96	0	96
Traced via Community Screening	26	0	26
Deaths	2	0	2
Cumulative Number of Persons Tested			22,633*
Days since last community transmission			135

*Total count includes the number of persons tested on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. With guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CHCC has opted not to report active and recovered cases.

Source: Joint Information Center - Guam, Commonwealth Healthcare Corp.

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Star Marianas Air increases scheduled flights. PAGE 10

PUBLIC NOTICE

Saipan Tribune will not be published on Jan. 1, 2021.

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BUSINESS
Loco & Taco across the Paseo de Marianas features old and new items on its menu.
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About 20 volunteers in the CNMI took part in the annual Christmas Bird Count this month.
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LIFE & STYLE
French fashion designer Pierre Cardin, who was also a licensing pioneer, dies at 98.
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Local

Saipan Tribune's TOP STORIES OF 2020

A sobering timeline of COVID-19

COVID-19 was a ripple that started in Wuhan, China, that later engulfed the world and sent economies crashing. The timeline of the COVID-19 pandemic reads like a horror movie playbook:

■ Dec. 31, 2019, to Jan. 5, 2020: Wuhan, China experiences an outbreak of "viral pneumonia."

■ Jan. 28: Gov. Ralph DLG Torres issues executive order suspending travel from mainland China to the CNMI.

■ Jan. 29: Torres issues Executive Order 2020-01 declaring a state of a significant emergency, ordering the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. to implement quarantine and preventative containment measures.

■ March 5: Torres declares a price freeze.

■ March 10: Torres names Warren Villagomez as chairman of the newly formed Governor's COVID-19 Task Force.

■ March 16: Torres declares a state of public health emergency in the CNMI.

■ March 16: Schools and government offices were closed until further.

■ March 24: The Office of Insular Affairs awards CNMI

Continued on Next Page

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From Page 2

$366,900 for personal protective equipment and hygienic supplies for first responders. Torres issues Enhanced Social Distancing Directive limiting businesses' operating hours, prohibits gatherings of more than 10 people and closes all parks in the territory.

■ March 28: First two cases of COVID-19 in the CNMI.

■ March 30: The CNMI has its first COVID-19 death.

■ April 7: The CNMI has its second COVID-19 death.

■ Oct. 28, the Torres-Palacios administration turned over the Alternate Care Site at Kanoa Resort in Susupe to CHCC.

■ Dec. 11: Federal Drug Administration gives emergency use authorization to the Pfizer/BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine. The CNMI received the Pfizer vaccine last Dec. 17.

■ Dec. 31, today the CNMI has 135 days with no community transmission. ***(Justine Nauta)***

COVID-19 brings CNMI economy to its knees

COVID-19 is so far the largest economic shock the world has experienced in decades, with the World Bank predicting a 5.2% contraction in global GDP in 2020. The CNMI picture is no less dire, with zero tourists, borders that are closed to international flights, hotels that are mostly closed, thousands who are jobless or working at reduced hours, and many businesses are shuttered, some of them permanently.

Saipan Chamber of Commerce president Velma Palacios said all businesses—large or small—are badly affected. "Take for example in the CNMI, the hotels, T-Galleria, airlines most have to close down or reduce their operations, which affects employees. …Businesses are struggling. …Everyone is trying to see how they can balance both health and safety with surviving in this economy," she said.

The CNMI remains a one-industry economy and with the global travel industry at a standstill due to the pandemic, the domino effect in the CNMI has been devastating, to many tourism-related businesses, from hotels, restaurants, dive shops, car rentals, and travel agencies, to allied companies that support these businesses also closing shop. At the start of the pandemic, when the CNMI shut down its borders in mid-March, the streets were eerily silent. The saving grace for many businesses was the first tranche of COVID-19 relief law that allowed many to avail of the Paycheck Protection Program and other pandemic relief measures under the CARES Act. ***(Bea Cabrera)***

Over 13,000 receive PUA benefits

As envisioned in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, or CARES Act, the CNMI implemented an employment assistance program called Pandemic Unemployment Assistance and Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation programs to help those who lost their jobs, were furloughed, or had their work hours reduced due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since the program's in-

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STK: 20H097A
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KBB: $8,954

2006 TOYOTA TACOMA SR5
97,531 MILES
STK: 6P297
SALE PRICE $14,995
KBB: $15,495

2015 MAZDA MAZDA3 SPORT
18,543 MILES
STK: 20D137A
SALE PRICE $9,995
KBB: $15,497

2013 FORD TAURUS ECO
SOLD
SALE PRICE $6,995
KBB: $9,542

2016 MAZDA MAZDA3 SPORT
SOLD
SALE PRICE $11,995
KBB: $17,303

2017 MAZDA CX-3 GT
4,550MILES • STK: 19D204A
SALE PRICE $14,995
KBB: $19,882

2017 HYUNDAI ACCENT GLS
16,979 MILES • STK: 7HS824
SALE PRICE $9,995
KBB: $13,650

2019 MAZDA CX-3 SPORT
SOLD
SALE PRICE $12,995
KBB: $19,355

2018 MAZDA MAZDA3 SPORT
8,730 MILES • STK:8HS878
SALE PRICE $14,995
KBB: $19,449

2017 HYUNDAI ACCENT GLS
21,585 MILES • STK:7HS772
SALE PRICE $9,995
KBB: $13,463

2017 MAZDA MAZDA3 SPORT
34,789 MILES • STK:7R218
SALE PRICE $13,995
KBB: $15,129

2018 MAZDA MAZDA3 SPORT
11,625 MILES • STK:8HS884
SALE PRICE $14,995
KBB: $19,554

2017 HYUNDAI ACCENT GLS
54,175 MILES • STK:9H106A
SALE PRICE $9,995
KBB: $11,986

2017 MAZDA MAZDA3 SPORT
34,648 MILES • STK:20M094A
SALE PRICE $13,995
KBB: $14,967

2018 MAZDA MAZDA3 SPORT
7,910 MILES • STK:8HS875
SALE PRICE $14,995
KBB: $19,496

2015 MAZDA MAZDA3 SPORT
SOLD
SALE PRICE $9,995
KBB: $15,497

2016 KIA SEDONA LX
29,307 MILES • STK:6HS764
SALE PRICE $13,995
KBB: $19,154

2016 HYUNDAI VELOSTER HATCHBACK
39,217MILES • STK: 20H068-A
SALE PRICE $14,995
KBB: $15,830

2017 HYUNDAI ACCENT GLS
39,201 MILES • STK:7R220
SALE PRICE $9,995
KBB: $12,682

2019 MAZDA CX-3 SPORT
SOLD
SALE PRICE $13,995
KBB: $19,946

2018 MAZDA MAZDA6 SPORT
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MAJESTY

From Page 1

people impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Which is why *Saipan Tribune* has chosen to honor Majesty Restaurant as its 2020 Small Business of the Year.

After being momentarily closed in the wake of the pandemic scare, Majesty Restaurant reopened mid-year and created its Full Belly, Full Hearts 1,000 Meals Initiative, which rose to the challenge of helping a large section of the CNMI community that were out of work and getting hungry each passing day. Working with its partners, Micronesian Brokers Inc. and Marianas Medical Center, Majesty Restaurant has so far distributed 1,022 hot meals and 692 relief bags.

Majesty Restaurant owner Alfred Ho explains the idea behind this initiative: "I love the CNMI. My children were born and raised here. That is why for me it is so hard to see what is happening here right now. A lot of people are suffering. One hot meal can make a difference in someone's day and a bag to take home can help a family can make a bigger different. It is not much, but we try to do what we can," he said.

He recounted that it was his niece, Jacqueline Che, who shared the idea with him since she volunteers in distributing relief bags. "We came up with the idea of offering both the bags of relief items and hot meals. That way people will come and leave with more than just canned goods. They can also eat meals prepared by our chefs," he said.

Its food and relief bag distribution effort isn't done yet. Majesty Restaurant plans to continue the Full Belly, Full Hearts 1,000 Meals Initiative throughout the new year.

"We will be continuing our distribution through January (delivery/meals on wheels) and plan on doing another on-site meal distribution right before the Chinese New Year, which falls on Feb. 12," added Ho.

Outside its humanitarian effort, Majesty Restaurant is one of the most well-known Chinese restaurants on Saipan. It was established in 2013 by Top Development Inc., which is a company involved in the tourism industry via hotel, restaurant, and bus transportation service operations.

The restaurant is best known for its flavorful dim sum, Peking duck, seafood, and sweet, and sour pork. "We use fresh and high-quality ingredients in every dish. We take great care in preparing our dishes. We also ensure that the cleanliness and ambiance of our restaurant [is up to par] so people can enjoy their meals," said Ho.

Majesty Restaurant had to shutter its massive red Chinese-style doors in the early part of this year due to COVID-19 concerns. "We closed the restaurant in March 19 and reopened back first week of July. Although business is slow, we are surviving thanks to the patronage of our loyal customers. Our restaurant caters to both locals and tourists. That is why we are still in operation." Ho said that many island families go to their restaurant for either in-house dining or to-go.

At the end of the day, Ho said, Majesty Restaurant owes its continued existence to the local community and is honored to serve them the past seven years. "I want to thank the people of the CNMI for supporting Majesty Restaurant through the years. It is our honor to be a part of this community. Thank you for supporting us. As long as we are here, we will do our best to continue serving you your favorite Chinese food and also giving back to this community that we love. Business is slower than usual, but we are thankful for the community's support. Because of local patronage, we are able to continue serving the best Chinese dishes on island," he said.

MUÑA

From Page 1

More than just mere monitoring, it was also a tangible show of leadership, making sure that if any questions or issues arose, the people who have the authority were there to immediately respond and make the decision, Muña said. "In the beginning, one of the reasons why we were there is you have to put some leadership there. …We want to make sure that when they make a decision, that their decision is the right decision," she said.

Also, she wanted to be there as a support system for CHCC personnel and first responders who were also present at the airport.

That hands-on approach and the leadership that Muña has shown in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the CNMI leadership's quick action to put in place a system to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the CNMI, is one of the reasons why the CNMI is now on its fourth month without an instance of community transmission, which is why *Saipan Tribune* has chosen Muña as its Person of the Year.

The CNMI's success in keeping its numbers down is underscored by the fact that, had the CNMI not done anything to combat the spread of COVID-19, the Federal Emergency Management Agency had predicted that there would be 6,000 to 8,000 COVID-19 cases in the CNMI by June this year. That has not happened. In fact, the number of COVID-19 cases in the CNMI—at 122—is only one higher than the 121 COVID-19 deaths in the neighboring island of Guam.

Of course, that the CNMI has managed to avert a pandemic disaster cannot be attributed to just one person. That feat is because of a potent mix of health care protocols created by CHCC and the COVID-19 Task Force, the quick action of Gov. Ralph DLG Torres and his administration in making key decisions and securing needed equipment, the cooperation of the larger CNMI community, and securing the assistance of the CNMI's business community and its expertise in logistics and getting things done fast. But, much like Dr. Anthony Fauci, who has become the face of the United States' response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Muña has also become the CNMI's de facto face of its COVID-19 response, providing a calming influence on an anxious community that relies on its health care professionals to provide clear answers to questions about the virus.

That's not to say that Muña herself was never anxious. One of the struggles she faced in dealing with COVID-19 is the fear that she could bring the virus back home to her family. "I have someone in my family that I have to protect. It's a lot more stress than usual, I tell you," she said. Muña said those overwhelming emotions also affected her team. "There's been a lot of emotions that come up within not only myself but also within our team. One of the things that come to mind when overcoming it is that we're not doing this for ourselves, we're all doing this for the community. And one thing about public health is it's about protecting the community," said Muña.

At the end of the day, she said, her main focus is to do the right thing not only for her staff but for the community as well.

Another one of her struggles as CEO is knowing that she is putting her staff at risk amidst the COVID-19 outbreak. "We're talking about putting our staff at risk. For example, if you're working in the hospital, that's a risk that they [the staff] are aware of, but when you're putting them basically outside the hospital that's not an operation of CHCC; it's not a normal operation that we do," said Muña.

And, of course, it wasn't just all COVID-19. She still has a hospital to run, patients to take care of. Muña said that, with more people on her team, she was able to make sure that both were running smoothly. "Working with the governor, [and] the [COVID-19] task force was key and… that's why I'm grateful because even at three o'clock in the morning, we're talking to each other, [saying] we got to get things going. We get on calls with Washington D.C., [and] that it's just a lot of things that we have to do. In some cases, the last thing on our mind is ourselves," she said.

Even at the start, Muña said she wanted to make sure that her staff had all the proper personal protective equipment to protect themselves, not only in the hospital but when they started the community-based testing at the Francisco c. Ada/Saipan International Airport.

It's not all been lovey-dovey for Muña. There may have been disagreements among the people that she's been working with but she said that nothing is ever personal. "One of the things that I love about the CNMI is that people may get upset with each other, but they don't take it personally in the end. That's what I saw throughout this process is that you get upset, but then the next day, you're facing this person, and you're saying, 'Hey, let's just get it done, let's recharge, and let's try to do it again,'" said Muña.

She also cited the community's cooperation with every COVID-19 protocol that were put in place. No matter how much someone didn't agree with it, they still followed every protocol, which is why the CNMI hasn't had a community outbreak for over 130 days, Muña said.

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Admin leave today OK'd

Gov. Ralph DLG Torres has authorized non-critical employees of the CNMI government to take an administrative leave after 12pm today, Dec. 31, 2020. ***(PR)***

CUC Customer Center hours

In observance of New Year's Day, the Commonwealth Utilities Corp.'s Customer Center will close today, Dec. 31, 2020, at 1pm and will be closed the entire Friday, Jan. 1, 2021. ***(PR)***

COLORADO

From Page 1

Elbert County community of Simla. Neither of them are residents of that county—expanding the possibility of the variant's spread throughout the state.

The Colorado State Laboratory confirmed the virus variant, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention was notified.

Scientists in the U.K. believe the variant is more contagious than previously identified strains. The vaccines being given now are thought to be effective against the variant, Colorado health officials said in a news release.

For the moment, the variant is likely still rare in the U.S., but the lack of travel history in the first case means it is spreading, probably seeded by travelers from Britain in November or December, said scientist Trevor Bedford, who studies the spread of COVID-19 at Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle.

"Now I'm worried there will be another spring wave due to the variant," Bedford said. "It's a race with the vaccine, but now the virus has just gotten a little bit faster."

Public health officials are investigating other potential cases and performing contact tracing to determine the spread of the variant throughout the state.

Will COVID-19 vaccines work on the new coronavirus variant?

Experts believe so, but they're working to confirm that.

A coronavirus variant in the United Kingdom has caused alarm because of the possibility that it might spread more easily. But even if that turns out to be true, experts say the COVID-19 vaccines being rolled out will likely still work on the variant.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the top U.S. infectious disease expert, said data coming from Britain indicates the vaccines still will block the virus. But the U.S. also will do tests to be sure.

Viruses often undergo small changes as they reproduce and move through a population. In fact, the slight modifications are how scientists track the spread of a virus from one place to another.

But if a virus mutates significantly enough, one worry is that current vaccines might no longer offer as much protection. And although that's a possibility to watch for over time with the coronavirus, experts say they don't believe it will be the case with the variant in the U.K.

"My expectation is, this will not be a problem," said Moncef Slaoui, the chief science adviser for the U.S. government's COVID-19 vaccine push. ***(AP)***

TOP

From Page 3

ception in the CNMI on June 17, the CNMI Department of Finance reported that over $170 million in PUA and FPUC benefits have been disbursed, with the CNMI Department of Labor disbursing payment to over 13,801 eligible claimants, over 70% of the number of applications the department has received since the program started. Over 5,000 claims have been flagged.

The CNMI DOL expects to process a second tranche of PUA and FPUC under a new COVID-19 relief bill.

There have been some complaints from people who claim not to have received their PUA payments yet or delays in releasing the money, prompting some minority lawmakers to hold a town hall meeting to solicit testimonies about the matter. ***(Kimberly A. Bautista)***

Over $50M stimulus checks released

As provided under the CARES Act, each taxpayer in the CNMI received at least $1,200 as part of a stimulus package intended to help people through the COVID-19 pandemic, with the Department of Finance issuing about $55 million worth of stimulus checks to all CNMI residents. The total amount of funding allocated for the Economic Impact Payments for the CNMI was $54.7 million.

Stimulus checks provide up to $1,200 for every eligible individual, $2,400 for joint returns, and $500 for every qualifying child.

A second round of stimulus checks was signed into law by President Donald Trump earlier this week, but only gives $600 per eligible individual and $1,200 for joint returns. ***(Kimberly Bautista)***

PSS suspends classes

The Public School System suspended all classes on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota starting March 16 in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. PSS initially aimed to resume classes in August but later announced that it will migrate to hybrid learning for the 2020-2021 semester. This is an educational model where some students attend class in-person, while others join the class virtually from home.

As PSS gets ready for their third semester on Feb. 3, 2021, parents are given a choice to have their child attend face-to-face classes or continue with remote classes. In order to comply with COVID-19 protocols of social distancing, half of the students will be attending

Continued on Page 6

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face-to-face classes on Tuesday and Thursday, the other half will be online, and then vice-versa on Wednesday and Friday. Since there hasn't been a community transmission of COVID-19, the capacity of students in the classroom was raised from 10 to 15 students.

As of Dec. 30, PSS is still implementing hybrid learning.

On March 25, private schools were already considering to start online learning. On March 27, Gov. Ralph DLG Torres suspended private schools from reopening.

On Sept. 11, four private schools were approved to reopen for in-person instruction: Isla Montessori, Eucon School, Mount Carmel School, and Seventh-Day Adventist School.

In August, Saipan International School, Saipan Community School, Grace Christian Academy, and Brilliant Star Montessori were allowed to reopen for in-person instruction.

As of Dec. 30, private schools are also doing hybrid learning. ***(Justine Nauta)***

Out-of-the-ordinary elections

The Nov. 3 general elections was extraordinary, not only because of the pandemic that had voters wearing masks in casting their votes but also because a resurgent NMI Democratic Party gave the usually dominant Republican Party a credible show at the polls.

The Democratic Party under the leadership of Nola K. Hix gave voters more choices this year by fielding an 18-person roster for legislative seats or almost a full slate, which is the first time in over four decades for the party.

Nine of the Democratic Party's 18 candidates were females, a historic first in the CNMI. Six of nine female candidates even prevailed as the Democratic Party and the Republican Party engaged in neck-and-neck races.

For the House race, eight Democrats, nine Republicans, and three independents won. Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan, an independent, ran unopposed for his seventh term as delegate.

If rumors are true that Rep. Ralph N. Yumul (R-Saipan) will later align with the Democratic Party, that will mean the majority in the coming 22nd House of Representatives this January will be a toss-up between the Republican Party and Democratic Party. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

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Propst resigns, but re-elected

Rep. Edwin K. Propst (Ind-Saipan) resigned last Oct. 1 as a representative for Precinct 1, less than two months after the Department of Public Safety said that it is looking into a complaint of sexual misconduct against him. Gov. Ralph DLG Torres then appointed Franklin R. Babauta (Ind-Saipan) to replace Propst.

Last Nov. 13, Babauta, a U.S. Army veteran and former Department of Public Safety official, took his oath of office as replacement for Propst. His term is short as members of the 22nd Legislature will take office this Jan. 13.

Meanwhile, representative-elect Celina R. Babauta (D-Saipan), who is the wife of Rep. Franklin Babauta, will represent the precinct after she landed second top voter among 14 candidates for Precinct 1.

Despite not campaigning for the post, Propst was re-elected after receiving the highest number of votes for Precinct 1. Although he has hinted in his posts in social media that he will be in the House again in the 22nd Legislature, he has yet to publicly announce this. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

Cancellation of international flights

Sichuan Airlines, China Eastern Airlines, and Beijing Capital Airlines suspended flights to the CNMI in early February due to COVID-19 pandemic.

It was at this time when President Donald Trump signed a proclamation that suspended or limited the entry to the U.S. of persons who pose a risk of transmitting the virus, which originated from Wuhan, China.

The suspension of flights caused a serious financial impact on the Commonwealth Ports Authority and the entire Commonwealth economy in general.

CPA's initial target date last July 15 to reopen the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport to international flights did not happen and the airport remains closed to international flights, except for the United Airlines flights from Guam and the inter-island flights of Star Marianas Air.

Gov. Ralph DLG Torres disclosed that the partial resumption of tourism from South Korea to the CNMI under a "travel bubble" program will start this January under an arrangement with E-Land Group of Companies. The first batch of tourists is expected to arrive on Saipan on Jan. 8 via a charter flight. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

Continued on Next Page

From Page 6

Imperial Pacific's many troubles

Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC is in so much trouble—financial and legal.

IPI failed to pay the $15.5 million annual casino license fee by the deadline last Aug. 12 and the $3.1 million annual regulatory fee that was due last Oct. 1. IPI also failed to contribute $40 million in Community Benefit Fund money in 2018 and 2019 as required by the casino license agreement.

The Commonwealth Casino Commission executive director has so far filed five complaints against IPI over the non-payment plus other alleged violations.

It is also facing numerous lawsuits for non-payment of services.

IPI has admitted facing serious financial problems, citing that when COVID-19 pandemic arose in China, it began to negatively affect IPI's business in December 2019. The pandemic forced the closure of IPI's business entirely on March 17, 2020, and is still not allowed to reopen. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

NMC suspends classes

The Northern Marianas College suspended face-to-face classes on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota mid-March. Majority of face-to-face classes transitioned to online platforms on March 18, with remaining classes transitioning in March 23.

NMC now offers 90% of its classes online. To help maximize student and employee safety, NMC's fall semester were mostly online, with 90% of the 247 classes being taught virtually or online, and only 10% taught in a face-to-face class; this mix is what is referred to as a hybrid format.

No NMC staff or instructor was furloughed, though. ***(Justine Nauta)***

PSS furloughs/unfurloughs teachers

The Public School System furloughed over 700 teachers at the start of the pandemic, but then again "unfurloughed" them as school year 2020-2021 approached in July. PSS recalled over 500 furloughed teachers last Aug. 11. ***(Justine Nauta)***

NMC receives $1.8M in EDA funds; demolition project done

The U.S. Economic Development Administration awarded $10.7 million to the Northern Marianas College to build a three-story Workforce Development and Training Center on the site where some

Continued on Next Page

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From Page 7

NMC buildings used to stand.

NMC announced that the demolition was completed last Dec. 17. Now the college will make way for the 20,158-square foot, three-story building that will be built on the site, which will house NMC's nursing and business programs and Center for Innovation. ***(Justine Nauta)***

CUC cuts CHCC's power

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. followed through with its threat to disconnect the Commonwealth Health Center's power supply for six hours every day last Sept. 8 after it failed to pay $5 million by Aug. 6.

The Torres-Palacios administration then met with CHCC officials and committed $2.5 million in an initial payment to CUC; however, CUC still went through with the disconnection.

Last Nov. 12, Greg Cruz, CUC chief financial officer, stated that CHCC has been doing well with paying their monthly bill. Adding that CHCC is up to date with their payment, however, as of Nov. 12, the administration has paid their share of $150,000 for September and October, but they have not paid for November. ***(Justine Nauta)***

Rota Mayor acquitted of all charges

After a two-year long legal battle, Rota Mayor Eifraim Atalig was acquitted of all charges filed against him in the U.S. District Court for the NMI.

The corruption case of Atalig and his common-law wife, Evelyn Atalig, that has dragged on for two years came to an end on Aug. 26, with federal court jurors unanimously finding the Ataligs innocent on all counts.

The men and women of the jury entered a unanimous decision acquitting the Ataligs of one count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud, wire fraud, and two counts of false statement.

The Ataligs were indicted for conspiracy to commit wire fraud, wire fraud, and false statement back in 2018 with the trial commencing and ending on August 2020. ***(Kimberly A. Bautista)***

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NMI Judiciary tours federal courthouse

Justices and judges from the CNMI Judiciary received a tour of the newly-built federal courthouse in Gualo Rai last Dec. 28, 2020.

The tour included visits to the U.S. Probation Office, law library, second floor courtroom, clerk's office, magistrate judge/visiting judge's chambers, and the district judge's third floor courtroom and chambers, among other courthouse spaces.

The CNMI bench also met with Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona and Magistrate Judge Heather L. Kennedy in a roundtable discussion on topics related to the COVID-19 pandemic such as remote proceedings, vaccinations for court staff, jury trial procedures, and other judicial practices.

From left, chief deputy clerk Bill Bezzant, Superior Court clerk Patrick Diaz, Court administrator Sonia Camacho, Supreme Court clerk Judy T. Aldan, Superior Court Judge Teresa Kim-Tenorio, Chief Justice Alexandro C. Castro, Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona, Presiding Judge Roberto C. Naraja, and Superior Court Judge Wes Bogdan. Not shown in picture are associate justices Perry B. Inos and John A. Manglona, Judge Joseph Camacho and Kenneth L. Govendo, and Magistrate Judge Heather L. Kennedy.
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The CNMI justices and judges are the first to receive an official tour of the completed building.

In June 2020, the U.S. District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands officially occupied the new courthouse in Gualo Rai. Prior to this, the District Court was housed in the Horiguchi Building in Garapan, Saipan, for over two decades.

Spearheaded by Manglona, the engineering and architectural feat was planned and constructed over a three-and-a-half-year period. "The project would not have been possible but for the many individuals who helped make it a success," said Manglona.

Group photo of the justices and judges after a special performance by the Marianas High School Glee Club, along with Hal Easton, at the U.S. Courthouse in Gualo Rai.
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The federal court anticipates hosting more tours in the future. For more information, visit the District Court's website at www.nmid.uscourts.gov. ***(PR)***

Public warned vs men-o-war jellyfish

A beach hazards statement is now in effect on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota until Tuesday afternoon due to the presence of Indo-Pacific men-o-war jellyfish, which pose a danger to the public.

Based on the information received from the National Weather Service in Guam and compiled at the CNMI Emergency Operations Center State Warning Point, men-o-war jellyfish will be present along northeast, east and southeast facing shores of the Marianas through Tuesday afternoon.

Contact with Indo-Pacific men-o-war, alive or dead, can cause extreme pain and may be fatal in some cases.

NWS Guam has received reports of these men-o-war washing up on Tarague and Tank beaches, and Jeff`s pirates cove.

CNMI residents are being advised to stay out of the water, especially along northeast, east and southeast-facing beaches and reef lines. If men-o-war are not found along the beach, they could still be out in the water.

Avoid making contact with men-o-war that have washed up on beaches, especially when bubbles can be seen. If stung, take out the tentacles, wash the wound with vinegar and then treat with heat pack. ***(PR)***

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Star Marianas Air increases scheduled flights

Star Marianas Air, Inc. announced yesterday that it would be increasing the number of scheduled seats operated between Saipan and Rota by 30% beginning January 2021.

SMA will be adding a third flight between Saipan and Rota on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Beginning Jan. 9, 2021, SMA will resume weekend flights between Saipan and Rota by initially operating one midday flight on Saturday and one afternoon flight on Sunday.

CONTACT INFO
Tel: (670) 433-9996 or 433-9998
Web: www.starmarianasair.com

In addition to the increased flights between Saipan and Rota, SMA will also be increasing its flights between Saipan and Tinian by beginning afternoon flights at 2pm on weekends. The change to the Saipan-Tinian flight schedule will take effect this weekend, Jan. 2, 2021.

"We are noticing that there is more demand for interisland travel and are happy to be able to adjust our services to meet the demand," said SMA reservations manager Myrese Cruz. "Demand is still below what we were seeing prior to the pandemic, but is showing signs of improvement which is very encouraging."

SMA is a U.S. regional commuter airline serving the CNMI and Guam. The "Star" in Star Marianas Air comes from the first letter of the islands of Saipan, Tinian, Aguiguan, and Rota. SMA operates a fleet of 14 aircraft and is the only airline based in the CNMI.

Information about SMA including flight schedules can be found on its website at www.starmarianasair.com or by contacting its reservations office on Tinian at (670) 433-9996 or 433-9998. ***(PR)***

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with a fresh spirit, beaming smile and love
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Fed court takes USA Fanter bid for judgment into consideration

The U.S. District Court for the NMI has placed under advisement USA Fanter Corp.'s motion for final judgment of over $2 million against the Saipan casino licensee.

This comes soon after USA Fanter filed a motion for summary judgment and final judgement order in the amount of $2,089,345.28 against Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC before Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona issues a written order.

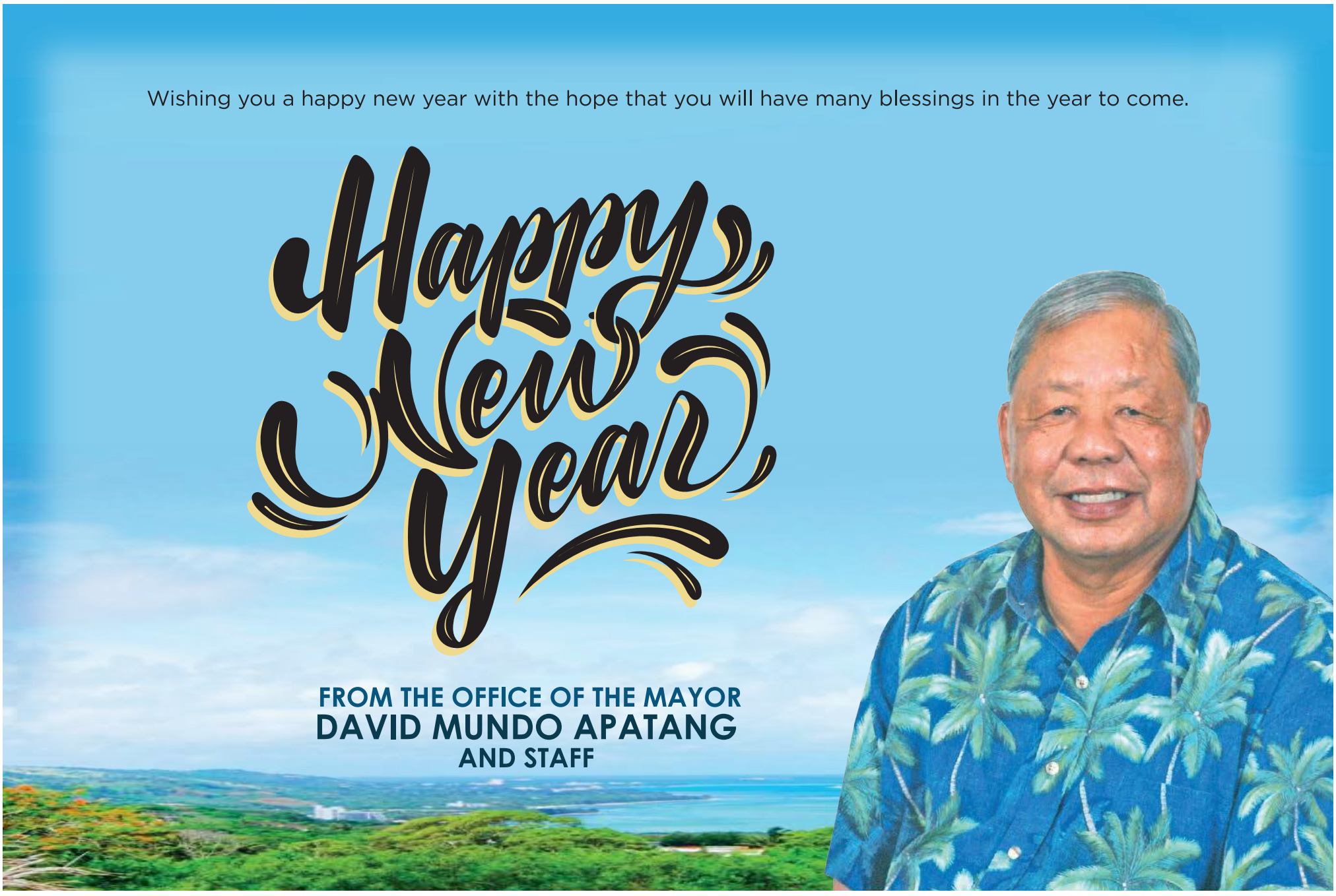
Manglona earlier granted USA Fanter's mechanic's lien petition in the amount of $2,089,345.28 against IPI. That was in September 2020.

A mechanic's lien is a guaranteed payment to builders, contractors, and construction firms and also ensures that the that party is paid before anyone else in the event of a liquidation.

USA Fanter claims that IPI has only paid it $300,000 to date.

USA Fanter, through Colin Thompson, is suing IPI for not paying the full amount due them under a construction contract for labor and material provided for the improvement of IPI's property.

According to the lawsuit, IPI fell behind on paying invoices from USA Fanter because IPI did not pay the agreed upon down payment. Despite promises it made to pay, IPI failed to make the payments required under the contract. USA Fanter stopped work on the project, terminated the construction contract, and sued IPI for amounts owed. ***(Kimberly A. Bautista)***


Wishing you a happy new year with the hope that you will have many blessings in the year to come.
Happy New Year
FROM THE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
DAVID MUNDO APATANG
AND STAFF

As 2020 comes to a close,
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Happy New Year

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Opinion

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EDITORIAL

The second stimulus is welcome, but it won't be enough

After holding America's fragile and weakened economy hostage for days as he dithered and waffled, President Donald Trump at last signed a $900 billion coronavirus aid package, one that includes a second round of stimulus payments for American households.

Trump's decision on Sunday brought an end to a self-inflicted round of confusion and uncertainty, after he bizarrely lashed out against the stimulus payments of up to $600 per person, denouncing that amount as inadequate and calling for a higher number: $2,000 per person. House Democrats, finding themselves on Trump's side for a rare change, giddily complied and passed a separate bill on Monday that would more than triple the stimulus payments; it is unclear whether Senate Republicans ultimately will go along.

It's worth remembering that the amount Congress approved—up to $600 per person—was the Trump administration's initial suggestion. That amount will cost $166 billion—which is roughly what Democratic leaders had proposed but an amount Republican leaders had refused to give to state and local governments. That aid was dropped from the legislation at the insistence of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., but it is desperately needed.

So the $600 figure didn't come out of nowhere. Trump's $2,000 figure, on the other hand, seems to have sprung purely from his desire to one-up every other proposal on the table. Including, bizarrely, his own.

The larger amount would undoubtedly solve a lot of problems for people struggling to keep themselves or their businesses going during the pandemic. That's why it's tempting to tell Trump, "Let's do it!" as House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., did on Twitter.

But as we noted last week, it's an inefficient way to help those who need it most. About 85% of Americans are slated to receive at least some direct aid; although every one of them will be happy to accept Uncle Sam's handout, most of them don't need the money and many will simply sock it away for the day they do. Those dollars provide neither relief nor stimulus.

We don't begrudge the enthusiasm voiced by politicians like Pelosi and Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., for the larger checks. They've long sought to have the federal government do more to help people in a downturn, even if the government overspends in the process. They're consistent, at least.

But there's no principle animating Trump, other than his desire to generate headlines. Here, he appears to be trying to buy popularity by showering the public with taxpayer money, which is just demagoguery. And beyond being irresponsible fiscal policy, it's irresponsible governance.

The massive law Trump signed on Sunday—it takes up more than 5,000 pages and a printed copy had to be flown to Florida, where Trump spent the weekend—is certainly bet-

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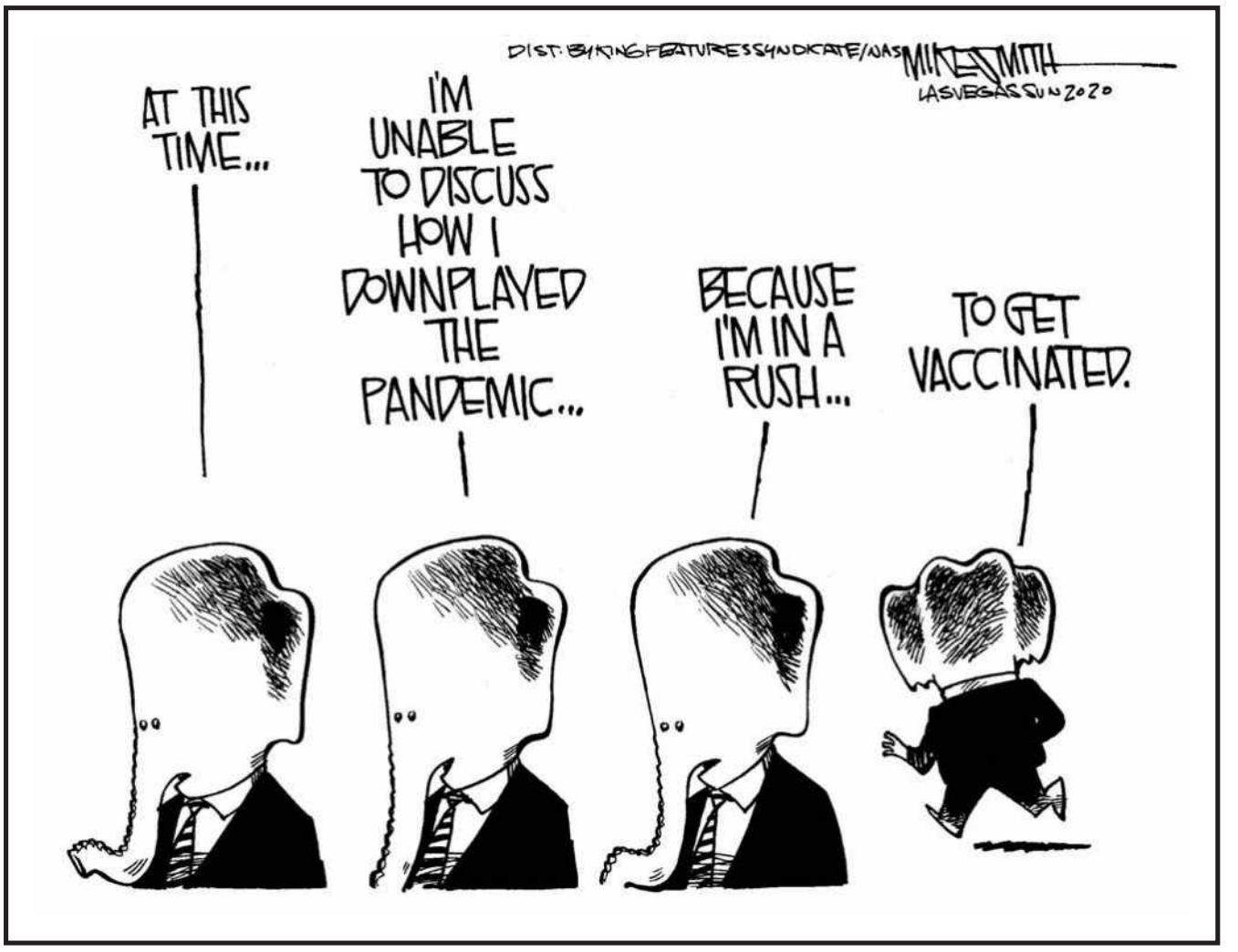
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I'M UNABLE TO DISCUSS HOW I DOWNPLAYED THE PANDEMIC...
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The year of the virus, the year of the mask. Be gone, 2020, that's all that we ask

By MARY SCHMICH
Chicago Tribune

Mary Schmich is a columnist for the Chicago Tribune *and winner of the 2012 Pulitzer Prize for commentary.*

Goodbye, 2020!
Good riddance, farewell!
You've maxed out our patience
You've put us through hell.

.

The year of the virus!
The year of the mask!
Be gone 2020!
That's all that we ask.

.

Winter
It started half hopeful —
A normal new year —
Despite the impeachment
of Trump, our King Lear.

.

"Obstruction of Congress!"
The Democrats cried
"Abuse of his power!
Our president lied!"

.

But Trump was acquitted —
Mitch wrangled the vote —
And when the plague surfaced
We barely took note.

.

A virus in China?
That's so far away!
It wasn't our problem
But then came a day …

.

A day in mid-March
When Tom Hanks said, "I'm sick"
The NBA canceled
And life collapsed quick.

.

"Pandemic," they called it
We'd live with that word
Along with so many
We rarely had heard.

.

Like "aerosols," "lockdown"
And "COVID-19"
Like "shelter-in-place"
And the dread "quarantine."

.

The rest'rants were shuttered
The taverns were locked
The hospitals teemed
And the loss left us shocked.

.

Each hug was a danger
Each handshake a threat
Each time we went out
We played virus roulette.

.

We learned how to distance —
Yo, 6 feet apart! —
To wash our hands often
To wipe down a cart.

.

We lived in our bubbles
We hoarded TP
We went to no concerts
But binged on TV.

.

Corona engulfed us
Like permanent weather
We sought to stay sep'rate
While also together.

.

We sanitized parcels
And often were grouchy
But all except rebels
Said, "Thank God for Fauci."

.

The good doctor schooled us
In hope and in science
He taught us precautions
Despite Trump's defiance.

.

The president dithered —
"Don't worry!" he said,
"We'll open by Easter!" —
We counted the dead.

.

We fought off despair
As we battled our gloom
We schooled kids at home
And held funerals on Zoom.

.

The health care providers
Were heroes we praised
They worked to exhaustion
For days upon days.

.

We waited in lines
To get tests, to get food …
And this was not all
That would darken our mood.

.

Spring
So much had been lost
And so much was destroyed
And then came a killing —
His name was George Floyd.

.

A cop pinned him down
And he struggled for breath
A movement exploded
Because of his death.

.

In cities and suburbs
Folks took to the street
They cried, "Black lives matter!"
They marched in the heat.

.

The young and the old —
They were Black, brown and white —
They knew it was time
To stand up for this fight.

.

Summer
The summer ticked on
Full of civil unrest
While ravaging wildfires
Ignited the West.

.

The president sputtered,
"This chaos must stop!"
He posed with a Bible —
Hey, look! Photo op!

.

He tweeted "ANTIFA!"
He spread his fake news
He goaded his fan base
To share his dark views.

.

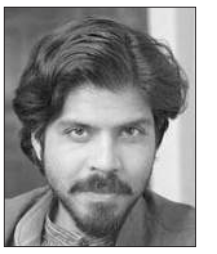
He said he'd send soldiers —
They might have to shoot! —
Dear Lord, how we wished
We could put him on mute.

.

See 2020 on Next Page

2020 should teach these democracies humility

By PANKAJ MISHRA
Bloomberg Opinion



Pankaj Mishra is a Bloomberg Opinion *columnist. His books include* Age of Anger: A History of the Present, From the Ruins of Empire: The Intellectuals Who Remade Asia, *and* Temptations of the West: How to Be Modern in India, Pakistan, Tibet and Beyond.

The year 2020 was, by any measure, rich in awakenings and reckonings. None were as earth-shaking as those forced upon the United States, Britain and India.

The pandemic found three of the world's most prominent democracies shockingly underprepared, governed by leaders as incompetent as they were deluded and encumbered with states that had steadily rendered themselves incapable of performing their most basic duty: protecting human lives.

In each case, stridently advanced claims—whether to be a new superpower (India), to become one again (Britain) or to provide moral leadership to the world (U.S.)—were broken on the wheel of an unforgiving virus.

The socioeconomic challenges before these countries suddenly seem immense, greater even than those faced after the calamity of two world wars. The conventional formulas for national uplift—intensified mass production of goods and services—are no longer enough in the age of deindustrialization and climate change. Meanwhile, the promise of the knowledge economy seems largely deceptive.

But a deeper and more intractable, if also intangible, problem lies in the realm of perception. For the pandemic revealed the great and crippling chasm that exists between reality and the images cherished by these countries. A future that represents an appreciable improvement over the present will remain elusive unless the diminished democracies develop less grandiose and more pragmatic self-images.

In the conventional, widely celebrated idea of India, the country brims with democratic virtues and seems destined to outpace China and take its place among the great Western powers. "India is not simply emerging," then-President Barack Obama claimed in 2010, "India has emerged."

This vision, hardened into an unassailable consensus by politicians, businessmen and journalists, ignored the country's unresolved contradictions of social and economic inequality, as well as its inept bureaucracies, dodgy bankers, defaulting businessmen, venal politicians and timorous journalists.

In Britain, the dream of imperial power and self-sufficiency grew more intense even as the country became more parasitic on inbound flows of financial capital. The final and shattering delusion was Brexit, a perfect act of national self-harm.

In the U.S., decades of political dysfunction, endless wars, economic crises and intolerable inequality culminated in four disastrous years of Donald Trump.

In all three cases, the political class and, to a damaging extent, the mainstream media and intelligentsia tried to keep up appearances long after they had frayed.

Thus, Obama could write in Wired magazine, a month before Trump's election in 2016, that for Americans there had never been a greater time to be alive. In Britain, an alliance of right-wing politicians and journalists won a massive electoral endorsement for their fiction that liberation from the European Union would unleash their country's world-beating prowess. Prime Minister Narendra Modi successfully kept up his rhetoric of regaining Hindu pride and glory long after his policy of demonetization had severely compromised India's economy.

All nations are imagined communities. But they lose sight of their essential tasks and fatally restrict their scope of action if they imagine themselves too extravagantly.

India today would be more resilient had it resisted irrational exuberance and diagnosed and repaired early such structural weaknesses as a poorly educated and underfed labor force and underinvestment in the rural sector. Likewise, Britain's fate as a country that no longer makes enough goods desired by the world need not have been so bleak.

The U.S. would not be a society divided into insulated winners and angry losers had it not believed its own rhetoric about the unimpeachable virtues of its liberal capitalist system after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Stagnation and decline had already set in by the 1990s, and the trillions of dollars spent on military capabilities and democracy-promotion abroad could have been used to stem inequality at home, or at least to bring public healthcare in line with other rich countries.

Illusions of grandeur are again flourishing as a traumatic year ends and a new one begins. The British government and its journalistic mouthpieces promise a windfall of "sovereignty" as Britain leaves the EU on Jan. 1, with or without a deal. India has started to hope again that it can replace China as a destination for manufacturers. The incoming Biden administration is broadcasting its intention, as thousands of Americans succumb to COVID-19 every day, to have the U.S. lead the world again.

Such desires cannot but seem a case of what Sigmund Freud called regression: The national ego is reverting to an earlier developmental stage instead of handling reality in a mature way, still insisting that a gap, cruelly exposed by the pandemic, between self-perception and reality can be narrowed.

With stricken nations, as with individuals, a new and better life becomes possible only after obsolete and unsafe ideas about self are discarded. Admittedly, countries cannot overnight abandon the self-flattering narratives that they have long generated for external consumption. Nevertheless, the great democracies would do well in the new year to adhere to a principle that underpins one of the world's most gainful businesses: Do not get high on your own supply.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Thank you

Since the CNMI first went into a pandemic lockdown earlier this year, I have been very impressed by the expeditious and effective actions taken by Gov. Ralph DLG Torres and his COVID-19 Task Force, chaired by Warren Villagomez, director for the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp.'s Public Health and Hospital Emergency Preparedness Program, and guided by CHCC chief executive officer Esther Muña. Their efforts, their team, and our entire community have helped make the CNMI the safest place in the county and one of the safest places in the world. I also appreciate how we have all worked together to restore some sense of normalcy to our islands, whether that be helping businesses safely open and keep our economy alive, facilitating safe face-to-face classes to ensure optimal student learning, or ensuring we can safely spend quality time with our family and loved ones from Thanksgiving through Christmas.

I have also been very impressed by the COVID-19 Task Force's success in securing and administering the COVID-19 vaccine in record time. Recently, my colleagues at Mount Carmel School and I have availed of the vaccine as education professionals. Despite a few minor glitches, the entire process, from registration to intake and administration, was extremely smooth, with CHCC staff demonstrating the utmost professionalism and even a bit of humor through it all.

I, for one, was personally moved by how well they handled my vaccination. I have an intense phobia of needles and often suffer extreme anxiety whenever receiving any kind of shot. However, resolved to keep my school family, my own family, and our community safe, I overcame my fear and signed up to get the vaccine. No amount of courage, though, could prepare me for what happened when I got my first dose. As soon as the needle left my arm, the room started spinning, my body was struck by hot flashes, and, before you know it, I was passing out. It was a harrowing experience.

But, thankfully, the CHCC team was there to save the day. They caught me before falling, quickly brought in a gurney, and rushed me to the emergency room, where they monitored my vitals and made sure I was okay. In particular, CHCC immunization program director John Moreno held me up as I started to pass out, CHCC chief operations officer Subroto Banerji personally escorted me to the emergency room, and even Esther Muña paid a visit to see how I was doing. I cannot express how much I appreciate this level of personal care and attention. That they would go to such great lengths for anyone speaks volumes about their deep and authentic commitment to the safety and health of our community.

Of course, I must also thank my wife who has always been there to help me whenever I get shots or whenever I just need her support. She was there too, staying with me the entire time and keeping my spirits up.

So, as we end this difficult year, I just want to again express my thanks to Gov. Torres, the COVID-19 Task Force, CHCC, and our entire community for doing what it takes to ensure a better and more prosperous future for our Commonwealth. Together, we are Marianas Strong!

God bless and happy New Year!

Galvin Deleon Guerrero, EdD
Garapan, Saipan

2020

From Page 12

The country was burning
A nation in flames
At least, sighed the ball fans,
We get to watch games.
.
And while we trudged onward
Some heroes expired
Among them John Lewis
Who left us inspired.
.
We lost Kobe Bryant,
We lost Justice Ruth
Who gave us the strength
To keep fighting for truth.
.
Autumn
While small business suffered
The stock market soared
While millions went jobless
The megarich scored.
.
The virus kept surging
And so did our dread
While those in the White House
Abetted the spread.
.
The president caught it:
Oh, would he survive?
He got special treatment
And stayed quite alive.
.
He held his great rallies
(Well, not all that great)
He said he'd beat Biden
In most ev'ry state!
.
But then came November
The voters said: No!
We're done with you, Donald
We're voting for Joe.
.
Trump pouted and lied
And he threatened a coup
But then Mitch McConnell
Conceded: He's through.
.
And now …
We called the year awful,
Chaotic and strange
And yet on the bright side
We learned how to change.
.
We saw life more clearly
For better and worse
We saw our divisions
And how they're a curse.
.
Divisions of justice
Divisions of wealth
Divisions of who
Gets a chance at good health.
.
We learned about courage
Learned better to share
We learned that it's time
For some major repair.
.
Though Facebook still stalks us
And spies on our tracks
Though misinformation
Is still spread by hacks
.
Democracy made it!
And though it feels frail
Let's pause for a moment
To share an exhale.
.
A new year is coming
It won't all be fun
But let's raise a toast
To the year '21!

STIMULUS

From Page 13

ter than nothing. It would extend enhanced federal jobless benefits for 11 weeks, giving hard-hit workers until March 14 and staving off the cruelty of cutting off benefits during the holiday season. But the new benefit, up to $300 per week, is half of what was in the original stimulus bill in the spring. It also extends Pandemic Unemployment Assistance—a program for freelancers and independent contractors—for the same period, providing an additional $100 per week.

The legislation also includes much-needed aid for K-12 schools and higher education, for broadband infrastructure, for vaccine distribution, for nursing homes and the child care industry, for some rental assistance and for nutrition subsidies.

Americans can breathe a sigh of relief as we close out one of the most difficult and miserable years in living memory. But the relief will not last long enough.

The extension of unemployment benefits was whittled down to 11 weeks from a proposed 16 weeks, purportedly to free up money for the stimulus checks. This trade-off was inefficient and unnecessary. Even with the promising vaccination campaign that is underway, it is hard to imagine the pandemic abating by mid-March. Moreover, halving the benefit to $300 from $600 will only prolong the pain for American workers, many of whom may not have permanent jobs to go back to.

The new law came after seven months of tough negotiations. And yet even tougher talks may lie ahead: President-elect Joe Biden has called for an aid package to be passed soon after he takes office on Jan. 20. What shape that takes—and even whether it happens at all—could depend on the outcome of the Jan. 5 runoff elections to determine two Senate seats in Georgia. For Democrats, the priority will rightly be on aid to cash-strapped state and local governments; for Republicans, their focus will be on shielding employers from pandemic-related liability. Pandemic relief will remain at the top of the agenda as we finally move on from the disastrous Trump era.

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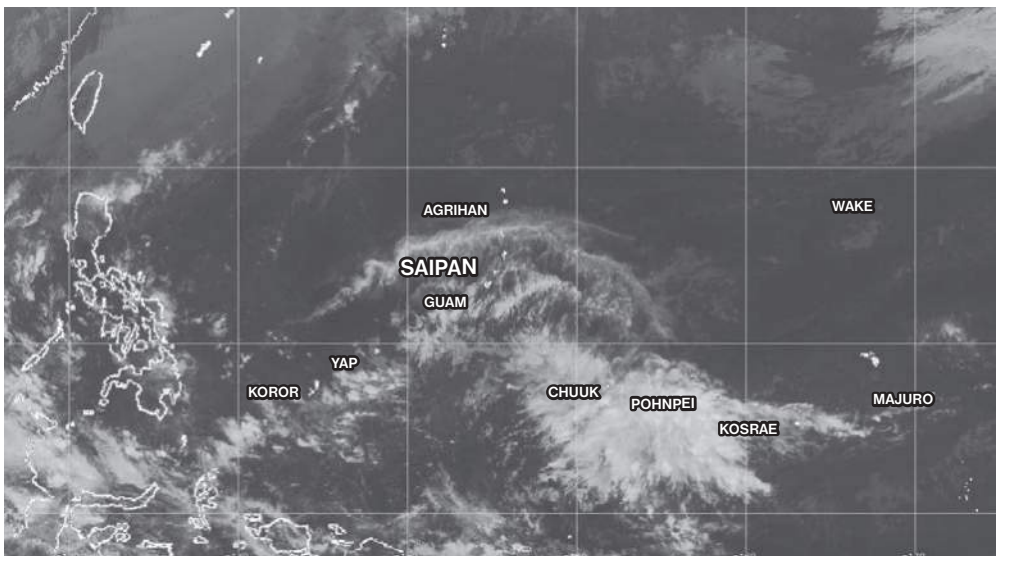
The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
Partly cloudy, becoming mostly cloudy thursday night. Isolated showers. East winds 10 to 15 mph.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated light showers.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers. Breezy Sunday.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers. Breezy Sunday.
86° 77°	86° 77°	86° 77°	87° 77°	87° 77°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 12:26 PM, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2020

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Issued Beach Hazard Statement due to new reports of Indo-Pacific men-o-war being washed up along northeast, east and southeast facing beaches. Also updated Surf Zone Forecast to add beach hazard headline.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

STOP THE SPREAD

The Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. continue to encourage residents within the Marianas to practice social distancing, which means avoiding close contact with people in order to avoid catching the virus yourself and to avoid passing it on to others.

- Stay home as much as possible. Avoid unnecessary travel or public places.
- Avoid social gatherings in groups of more than 10.
- Choose drive-thru, take-out, or delivery options, or outdoor seating, if available, when dining in.
- Send only one healthy adult from the household run necessary errands, such as getting groceries or picking up medications. Leave children, elderly, and other vulnerable people at home as much as possible. When returning home from an errand, wash your hands before doing anything else.
- Older adults and people with chronic medical conditions are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness. People at high risk should stay at home as much as possible.
- Create a household plan of action, https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/checklisthousehold-ready.html
- Ensure a 30-day supply of all medicines.

Continue good hand hygiene

- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, avoid touching your face, cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available.

Know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and what to do if you become symptomatic

- Stay home when you are sick and if you recently traveled to a place with COVID-19. Self-quarantine means:
- ❏ Choosing a room in your house that can be used to separate sick household members from others.
- ❏ Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- ❏ Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- ❏ Limiting visitors

CHCC appreciates the patience and understanding of the community at this time. To obtain general information about the CNMI COVID-19 response, contact the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force Hotline at 287-0046, 287-0489, 287-1089. These numbers are available Monday to Sunday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For medical information about COVID-19, reach out to the COVID-19 Infoline at the following numbers: 285-1672/1352. These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For mental health support and helpful tips during a crisis, call the Mental Health Support Line at 285-1856, 323-6560, 323-6561 These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30 pm. For the 24/7 Disaster Distress Helpline, call SAMSHA at 1-800-985-5990.

For more information about DIY face coverings, visit https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html

For more information about CHCC programs, follow CHCC on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter at @cnmichcc, check out our website at www.chcc.gov.mp or call us at (670) 234-8950.

For more information on the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force, visit www.governor.gov.mpand, follow @GovernorCNMI on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

This health advisory may be found online at http://www.chcc.gov.mp/pressrelease.html and at www.governor.gov.mp/covid-19.

Rumor control

During crises like this, oftentimes the spread of misinformation is just as dangerous as the virus itself. The CNMI is reminded to only share official and verified notices, press releases, and advisories from the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and CHCC.

Source: Office of the Governor

NEWS DESK For news tips, corrections and requests for news coverage, call (670) 235-NEWS (6397), 235-2440, fax 235,3740. E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com. Website:www.saipantribune.com.

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MICRONESIA	▲ ▼ °F	
Guam and Rota	Thunderstorms	86° / 78°
Palau	Thunderstorms	82° / 77°
Yap	Thunderstorms	84° / 78°
Chuuk	Thunderstorms	85° / 80°
Pohnpei	Thunderstorms	85° / 77°
Kosrae	Thunderstorms	85° / 77°
Majuro	Thunderstorms	83° / 79°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:42 AM	5:57 PM
Friday	6:43 AM	5:57 PM
Saturday	6:43 AM	5:58 PM
Saturday	6:43 AM	5:59 PM
Sunday	6:44 AM	5:59 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	7:27 AM	6:56 PM
Friday	-	8:19 AM	7:53 PM
Saturday	-	9:09 AM	8:51 PM
Saturday	-	9:56 AM	9:47 PM
Sunday	-	10:40 AM	10:42 PM

AROUND THE GLOBE	▲ ▼ °F	
Auckland	Partly Cloudy	75° / 63°
Beijing	Partly Cloudy	39° / 21°
Hong Kong	Sunny	73° / 59°
Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	81° / 70°
London	Rain	45° / 41°
Los Angeles	Sunny	79° / 52°
Manila	Partly Cloudy	86° / 73°
Melbourne	Mostly Cloudy	72° / 55°
Miami	Mostly Sunny	80° / 64°
New York	Mostly Cloudy	26° / 20°
Osaka	Mostly Sunny	52° / 39°
Paris	Rain	46° / 45°
Busan	Partly Cloudy	54° / 37°
Rome	Sunny	52° / 37°
Salem	Partly Cloudy	48° / 33°
San Francisco	Partly Cloudy	59° / 45°
Seoul	Partly Cloudy	41° / 28°
Tokyo	Mostly Sunny	50° / 36°
Washington, DC	Partly Cloudy	37° / 26°

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY	FEET	
2:21 AM	Low Tide	-0.56
9:34 AM	High Tide	1.68
2:54 PM	Low Tide	1.08
7:31 PM	High Tide	1.65

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF NOVEMBER 1, 2020

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA117	6:55am	7:35am	1, 4, 6

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

UA117/183	6:55am	9:50pm	1 via Guam

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

UA183	8:00pm	9:50pm	1, 3, 5

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	5:10am	5:51am	1, 4, 6

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA184/174	10:40pm	5:51am+1	3, 5 via Guam

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

UA184	10:40pm	4:30am+1	1, 3, 5

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF OCTOBER 8, 2020

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1301	8:30AM	9:00AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
1302	11:00AM	11:30AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
1303	3:30PM	4:00PM	Mon/Wed/Fri

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3101	9:30AM	10:00AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
3102	12:00AM	12:30AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
3103	4:30PM	5:00PM	Mon/Wed/Fri

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3401	12:15	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
4301	13:00	13:30	Temporarily Unavailable

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1201	7:00	7:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	10:00	10:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1205	11:00	11:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1206	12:00	12:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1207	13:00	13:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1208	14:00	14:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1209	15:00	15:15	Daily
1210	16:00	16:15	Daily
1211	17:00	17:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1212	18:00	18:15	Temporarily Unavailable

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
2101	7:30	7:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2102	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	10:30	10:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2105	11:30	11:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2106	12:30	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2107	13:30	13:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2108	14:30	14:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2109	15:30	15:45	Daily
2110	16:30	16:45	Daily
2111	17:30	17:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2112	18:30	18:45	Temporarily Unavailable

Business

Affordable lunch specials at Loco & Taco

BEA CABRERA
Loco & Taco manager James Ko knows that the community and wants something different to satisfy their palate that is why they came up with new dishes and flavor.

Loco & Taco is located along Beach Road across Paseo De Marianas in Garapan and offers lunch specials, different kinds of delicious burritos, and happy hour.
BEA CABRERA

By BEA CABRERA
beacabrerasaipan@gmail.com
CORRESPONDENT

Under new management since October, your favorite Mexican restaurant on island, Loco & Taco, located along Beach Road across Paseo de Marianas, carries the old menu and more. According to manager James Ko, since taking over the business, they only made things better.

"Loco & Taco is now run by longtime businessman Mickey Kim of Saipan Adventure, who is known for dive and hiking activities for tourists. Since tourism in the CNMI is on hold due to the pandemic, Kim thought that this was a great opportunity for him to be a part of the community again by taking over this restaurant business," said Ko.

"We still have the items in the old menu and added affordable lunch specials and K-Burritos that are available Monday to Friday from 11am to 2pm… we deliver on orders of five meals or more and we also partnered with food delivery service, EatsEasy," he added.

For only $7.50 with bottled water, customers can enjoy a wide variety of Loco & Taco lunch specials like Taco Lunch Special (2 taco specials, macaroni salad, and chips with salsa), Taco Salad Special (shrimp taco salad, mini chicken burrito, and chips with salsa), garlic shrimp over rice with macaroni salad, sweet chili shrimp over rice with macaroni salad, pork belly fried rice, Korean-style pork belly fried rice with egg, Spam tuna egg special (spam, tuna, corn, eggs, and stir-fried kimchi over rice), Korean-style spicy chicken stew with rice, and Japanese-style chicken teriyaki.

For burrito lovers, K Burrito specials include Egg Bomb Burrito (fluffy eggs), Volcano Burrito (spicy fishcake), Healthy Burrito (seasoned anchovies and nuts), Sushi Burrito (salmon and tuna), and Local Special Burrito (bulgogi and red rice).

"We opened up the bar two weeks ago and we are happy to serve happy hour everyday from 5pm to 7pm. We have special promos where we offer Bud Bucket of 5 plus chips and salsa for only $18, happy hour chasers like mochiko chicken, quesadilla, nachos with Beef Colorado or with carnitas, buffalo wings, poke (tuna), and for music lovers, we have a live band every Saturday from 8pm to 10pm," Ko said.

"Old-time favorites like the oxtail soup, garlic steak, ahi (tuna steak), guacamole burger, tacos, and quesadillas, and more are still available… everyone's favorite our $1 taco is available Monday to Sunday all day long with beef and fish fillings every Tuesday and Sunday and other days it can be carnitas, chicken teriyaki, etc.," Ko added.

For more information, call (670) 233-5233, email: locoandtaco.outlook.com, or visit their Facebook page: Loco and Taco and Instagram: Loco and Taco.

Trump's $2,000 checks stall in Senate as GOP blocks vote

WASHINGTON (AP)—President Donald Trump's push for bigger $2,000 COVID-19 relief checks stalled out Tuesday in the Senate as Republicans blocked a swift vote proposed by Democrats and split within their own ranks over whether to boost spending or defy the White House.

The roadblock mounted by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell may not be sustainable as pressure mounts. Trump wants the Republican-led chamber to follow the House and increase the checks from $600 for millions of Americans. A growing number of Republicans, including two senators in runoff elections on Jan. 5 in Georgia, have said they will support the larger amount. But most GOP senators oppose more spending, even if they are also wary of bucking Trump.

Senators will be back at it Wednesday as McConnell is devising a way out of the political bind, but the outcome is highly uncertain.

"There's one question left today: Do Senate Republicans join with the rest of America in supporting $2,000 checks?" Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said as he made a motion to vote.

Meanwhile, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said some of the $600 payments might be sent by direct deposit to Americans' bank accounts as early as Tuesday night. Mnuchin tweeted that paper checks will begin to go out Wednesday.

The showdown over the $2,000 checks has thrown Congress into a chaotic year-end session just days before new lawmakers are set to be sworn into office for the new year. It's preventing action on another priority—overturning Trump's veto on a sweeping defense bill that has been approved every year for 60 years.

Saying little, McConnell signaled an alternative approach to Trump's checks that may not divide his party so badly, but may result in no action at all.

The GOP leader filed new legislation late Tuesday linking the president's demand for bigger checks with two other Trump priorities—repealing protections for tech companies like Facebook or Twitter that the president complained are unfair to conservatives as well the establishment of a bipartisan commission to review the 2020 presidential election he lost to President-elect Joe Biden.

Warmest thoughts and best wishes for a Happy New Year. May peace, love and prosperity follow you always.
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Nation

Biden criticizes pace of vaccine rollout, vows to accelerate

WILMINGTON, Del. (AP)—President-elect Joe Biden criticized the Trump administration Tuesday for the pace of distributing COVID-19 vaccines and predicted that "things will get worse before they get better" when it comes to the pandemic.

"We need to be honest—the next few weeks and months are going to be very tough, very tough for our nation. Maybe the toughest during this entire pandemic," Biden said during remarks in Wilmington, Delaware on Tuesday.

His comments come as the coronavirus pandemic has killed more than 336,000 Americans, with experts warning holiday travel and gatherings could precipitate yet another spike in virus cases even as the virus has already been surging in states nationwide.

Biden encouraged Americans to "steel our spines" for challenges to come and predicted that "things are going to get worse before they get better."

He also went after the Trump administration over its vaccination efforts, warning that the project, dubbed Operation Warp Speed, is moving at a slower pace than needed.

"As I long feared and warned the effort to distribute and administer the vaccine is not progressing as it should," he said.

Earlier this month, Trump administration officials said they planned to have 20 million doses of the vaccine distributed by the end of the year. But according to data provided by the Centers for Disease Control, just over 11.4 million doses have been distributed and only 2.1 million people have received their first dose.

At the current pace, Biden said, "it's gonna take years, not months, to vaccinate the American people."

President Donald Trump deflected Biden's critique. "It is up to the States to distribute the vaccines once brought to the designated areas by the Federal Government," he tweeted Tuesday. "We have not only developed the vaccines, including putting up money to move the process along quickly, but gotten them to the states."

Biden, who takes office Jan. 20, said he has directed his team to prepare a "much more aggressive effort, with more federal involvement and leadership, to get things back on track."

The president-elect said he would "move heaven and earth to get us going in the right direction."

Family of lone suspect in Illinois shooting expresses condolences

ROCKFORD, Ill. (AP)—Family of a U.S. Army special forces sergeant charged in a deadly shooting at a northern Illinois bowling alley released a statement Tuesday extending their thoughts and prayers to victims and the wider community.

Duke Webb, 37, faces three counts of murder for each person killed and three counts of first-degree attempted murder for each person injured in the Saturday night shooting at Don Carter Lanes, in Rockford, some 80 miles (130 kilometers) northwest of Chicago.

"We are shocked and saddened to learn of this tragedy," the Webb family said in a brief written statement. "The Webb family is grieving for all those involved. We would like to extend our thoughts and prayers to those impacted and the community of Rockford."

Webb was taken into custody shortly after shooting and without officers firing a shot, Rockford Police Chief Dan O'Shea said Sunday. He has no known ties to the victims and authorities "believe this was a completely random act," O'Shea said.

At an initial hearing Monday, Duke Webb's lawyer, Elizabeth Bucko, told the court her client may suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. Webb joined the Army in 2008 and did multiple tours in Afghanistan, the Army said. He was on leave Saturday.

Tuesday's statement, released on the Webb family's behalf by Sikeston, Missouri,-based attorney James M. McClellan, cited Webb's military service, saying, "Duke has served his country Honorably for twelve years in special forces as a Green Beret."

Winnebago County State's Attorney J. Hanley said Monday that Webb was in the Rockford area visiting family. He declined to comment on possible motives.

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
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PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

The Honorable Ralph Dlg. Torres, Governor and the Honorable Arnold I. Palacios, Lt Governor, through the Board of Parole Office, and pursuant to Public Law 8-41, Section II of the "Open Government Act of 1992", hereby give Official Notice that a Parole Hearing is scheduled for **January 06 & 07, 2021 (Wednesday-Thursday), beginning at 9:00 a.m.**, at the Honorable Pedro P. Tenorio Multi-Purpose, Office of Governor, located at Susupe, Saipan MP 96950. The Agenda is as follows:

I. Preliminary Matters
1. Call to order
2. Roll Call
3. Presence of Quorum

II. Consent Items
1. Adoption of Agenda

III. Parole Hearing

		BOP No.:	Criminal Case No.:
1.	Sung Joon Park	21-001	19-0109
2.	Shi Li Hui	21-002	19-0109
3.	Sheng Qui Yin	21-003	17-0160
4.	Fei Long Zheng	21-004	16-0235
5.	Reynaldo Manila	21-005	00-0509C
6.	Benjamin B. Lee	21-006	17-0112
7.	Anthony L. Muna	21-007	18-0075
8.	Marcus Untalan	21-008	16-0019 / 16-0120 / 16-0193
9.	Ezekiel Smith	21-009	18-03006

IV. Adjournment

If deemed necessary, members of the Board of Parole may elect to vote to meet in Executive Session to discuss any of the items listed above.

If you have any question or need additional information, please contact the Board of Parole Office at telephone numbers 664-3300.

/s/ Ramon B. Camach, BOP Chairman — 12/21/20 Date

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
BOARD OF PAROLE
P.O. Box 502641, SAIPAN, MP 96950-2641
TEL. NOS.: (670) 664-3300 – 3302 • FAX: (670) 664-3310
Email: govbop@pticom.com

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

The Honorable Ralph Dlg. Torres, Governor and the Honorable Arnold I. Palacios, Lt Governor, through the Board of Parole Office, and pursuant to Public Law 8-41, Section II of the "Open Government Act of 1992", hereby give Official Notice that an **Executive Board Meeting** is scheduled for **January 08, 2021, Friday, at 9:00 a.m.**, at the Honorable Pedro P. Tenorio Multi-Purpose, Office of Governor, located at Susupe, Saipan MP 96950. The following items are included in the agenda:

I. Preliminary Matters
A. Call to order
B. Roll Call
C. Presence of Quorum

II. Consent Items
A. Adoption of Agenda
B. Adoption of Meeting Minutes
a) Parole Hearing Minutes – July 08 – 10, 2020
b) Executive Meeting Minutes – July 10, 2020

III. New Business
A. Record Retention
B. 2021 Budget allotment

IV. Old Business
a) To discuss the eligible date for applicant Shawn Appleby to reapply for Parole.
b) To review and discuss Title 115 Parole Board Regulation

V. Miscellaneous
A. Schedule of next Parole Hearing
B. Schedule of next Executive Meeting

VI. Adjournment

For any additional information about the meeting, please call the Parole Office at telephone numbers 664-3300.

/s/ Ramon B. Camacho, Chairman, Board of Parole — 12/21/20 Date

DIVISION OF COASTAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
P. O. Box 501304, Saipan MP 96950 | Gualo Rai Center, Saipan
TEL. NO. 664-8300 | FAX NO. 664-8315
www.dcrm.gov.mp

NOTICE OF APPLICATION
As of December 31, 2020

THE FOLLOWING IS A PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF COASTAL PERMIT APPLICATIONS RECEIVED BY THE DCRM OFFICE:

APPLICANT	DATE APPLICATION RECEIVED	APPLICATION PROJECT DESCRIPTION	LOCATION	TYPE	STATUS
1. Office of Representative Jose I. Itibus, 21st House of Representatives	12/09/2020 SSm-2021-007	Construction of Two Beach Pala Pala Structures	Garapan, Saipan	Shoreline	Approved* 12/14/2020
2. Success International Corporation	05/19/2020 SMS-2020-X-048	New Hope Quarry Operation	As Matuis, Saipan	Major Siting	Approved* 12/22/2020
3. Department of Public Works	10/23/2020 SMS-2016-X-088	Phase I & II, Route 33 Beach Road Improvements	Beach Road, Saipan	Major Siting	Approved 12/22/2020
4. P&A Corporation	10/30/2020 SMS-96-X-020-A1	Winners Commercial Facilities	Afetnas, Saipan	Major Siting	Approved 12/22/2020
5. U.S.A. Fanter Corporation, LTD. dba G.C. Construction Contractor	12/28/2020 SPIm-2021-009	Temporary Staging/Stockpiling	Puerto Rico, Saipan	Ports & Industrial	Under Review*

NMIAC §15-10-210 of the CRM Rules and Regulations requires all permit applications to be published in a newspaper for general circulation within the CNMI within 15 days of receipt of application. The list reflects recently received permit applications and those with a recent change in status. New applications are marked with an asterisk (*).

The Public is invited to submit written comments regarding any of the above projects for which a permit decision has not been issued. All permit comments should identify the project by application number. Your comments should be mailed or hand-delivered to the DCRM Office. All persons who desire a public hearing regarding any project may do so by submitting a written request for a public hearing to the DCRM Office within fourteen (14) days for minor permits (APCs) and proposed amended major sitings. Public Hearings are required for all new major siting projects. All public hearing notices are published in a local newspaper of general circulation. Residents of Rota and Tinian may submit comments and hearing requests to their local DCRM Coordinator. Persons wishing to retain the right to appeal a DCRM Permit decision must file a notice of appeal with the DCRM office within thirty (30) days of the issuance of the DCRM permit decision as provided in Part 200 § 15-10-235 of the DCRM Regulations.

COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY
Main Office: FRANCISCO C. ADA/SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
P.O. BOX 501055, SAIPAN MP 96950-1055
Phone: (670) 237-6500/1 • Fax (670) 234-5962
E-mail Address: cpa.admin@pticom.com • Website: www.cnmiports.com

ARFF TRAINING FACILITY TYPHOON DAMAGES GENERAL REPAIRS/REPLACEMENT
Project No. CPA-SA-001-19

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

The Commonwealth Ports Authority (CPA) is soliciting proposals for general repairs and/or replacement of typhoon damages sustained by Super Typhoon Yutu at the ARFF Training Facility (ARFFTF) at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport as per this Scope of Work (SOW) and associated Contract Documents, meeting all current federal, state and local government agencies' rules and regulations.

The Scope of Work (SOW) outlining the project's general requirements may be picked up at the CPA Administration Office at no cost. Project approach and costs must be within the parameters of the established SOW. Any deviation from the SOW, a proposal based on reduced SOW or a proposal that exceeded what is required by the SOW, may be grounds for immediate disqualification of the offeror's proposal package.

A pre-proposal conference will be held on Friday, January 15, 2021 at 10:00 am at the ARFF Training Facility at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport to discuss the project scope of work in detail. Attendance to the pre-proposal conference is mandatory. A site inspection will immediately follow the pre-proposal conference. Additional site visits after the pre-proposal conference may be coordinated with CPA's Project Manager, Mr. Andrew Ellison, at telephone number 671-689-1262 or 670-288-0907 or Ms. Wendi Prater, CPA Executive Assistant/Project Manager, at 670-237-6519, but only until January 22, 2021.

Questions shall be submitted in writing to Ms. Prater, via hand delivery to CPA, or via email to wprater@cnmiports.com by no later than 5:00 p.m., Friday, January 22, 2021. Responses to questions or requests for information will be provided to all proposers who attend the mandatory pre-proposal conference.

Proposers shall submit one (1) original and four (4) copies of the proposals, sealed in an envelope and marked on the cover package outside as follows: **"Proposal for General Construction Repairs/Replacement for SIA ARFF Training Facility, Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport, CPA-SA-001-19"**. Proposals must be submitted by no later than **5:00 P.M. CHST, FRIDAY, JANUARY 29, 2021**, to the Office of the Executive Director at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport. All proposals shall become property of the Commonwealth Ports Authority.

FOR THE COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY

/s/ CHRISTOPHER S. TENORIO, Executive Director — Date: December 17, 2020

World

WORLD BRIEFS

Russia's updated stats on virus-linked deaths show increase

MOSCOW (AP)—Russia's updated statistics on coronavirus-linked deaths show that well over 100,000 people with COVID-19 had died in the pandemic by December, a number much higher than previously reported by government officials. The data released Monday by Russia's state statistics agency, Rosstat, brought the agency's count of people with COVID-19 who died between April and November to 116,030. That included cases where the virus was not the main cause of death and where the virus was suspected but not confirmed. The data also showed that the number of deaths from all causes in the first 11 months of this year grew by 229,700, or nearly 14%, compared to the same period in 2019. Deputy Prime Minister Tatyana Golikova told a government meeting Monday that the increase reported between January and November by Rosstat for the most part is related to the coronavirus. "I would like to note that over 81% of the increase in mortality in this period is related to COVID and the consequences of being infected with COVID," Golikova said. Golikova's comment suggests that some 186,000 deaths may be linked to the coronavirus.

Japan virus outbreaks, scandals sap public support for Suga

TOKYO (AP)—Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga came to office on a wave of popularity, pledging to combat the coronavirus and fix Japan's languishing economy. Three months after he took over from his former boss Shinzo Abe, a more charismatic leader from an influential political family, Suga seems to be struggling to find his feet. His support ratings have sunk amid flaring virus outbreaks and scandals within the ruling party, even as the economy appears to be recovering. On Monday, the Nikkei financial newspaper said its latest survey found approval ratings for Suga's government had sunk more than 30 points to 42% from 74% in late September. The 48% of those questioned who disapproved mainly cited a lack of leadership and poor handling of the pandemic. One big source of trouble has been the government's "GoTo Travel" campaign, which provides steep discounts for domestic travel.\ The program was launched in the summer, before Suga took office.

Thailand imposes new restrictions amid coronavirus outbreak

BANGKOK (AP)—Officials in the Thai capital have announced new restrictions, including the closure of some entertainment facilities during the New Year's holiday, as infections continued to rise following a recent coronavirus outbreak. After months of seeming to have the COVID-19 situation under control, Thailand has seen two major clusters developing since mid-December that threatened to undo its progress. One has mainly infected hundreds of migrant workers from Myanmar at a seafood market near Bangkok, the capital, while in recent days a cluster has grown connected to a gambling den in an eastern province. As part of the restrictions announced Monday, hostess bars, gambling venues and massage parlors in Bangkok were ordered by the city government to close from Tuesday until Jan. 4. Bars and restaurants will be allowed to remain open during this period, but must close at midnight and adhere to social distancing requirements. Thailand reported 155 new coronavirus infections on Tuesday morning.

GRANITE®

Granite Construction Co Guam has employment opportunites for the following trades for a project located in **Saipan CNMI**:

Foremen (5)
Carpenters (15)
Masons (10)
Ironworkers (10)
Laborers (10)

Project: FEMA Permanent Housing Construction, Saipan CNMI

Only U.S Qualified Workers Will Be Considered

Please pick up an application at
Room Number 239 at the Surfrider Hotel Resort,
Chalan Kanoa, Beach Road, Saipan.

Hours of Operation: 7:00 am to 4:00 pm
Telephone: 670-235-7873

Deadline to apply is December 30, 2020

Granite Construction Co Guam is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer of Minorities, Females, Protected Veterans, Individuals With Disabilities and is a Drug-Alcohol Free Work Place.

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
Office of the Executive Director

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
CUC-RFP-21-009

Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) for Power Plant No.1, Lower Base, Saipan

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC), is soliciting competitive sealed proposals from qualified and experienced entities for a turn-key design and implementation of two SCADA systems and two additives at Power Plant No.1, Lower Base, Saipan, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands.

The award of this project is under the Department of the Interior Office of Insular Affairs.

The RFP Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $100.00 for one package.

One (1) original and five (5) hard copies of your submission must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked ***"CUC-RFP-21-009, Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) System for Power Plant No.1, Lower Base, Saipan"*** to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **January 5, 2021.** Late submissions and conditional offers will not be considered.

Discussions may be conducted with responsible offerors who submit proposals determined to be reasonably susceptible of being selected for award for the purpose of clarification and to ensure full understanding of and responsiveness to solicitation requirements. All proposers shall be accorded fair and equal treatment with respect to any opportunity to discussion. During discussions, there will be no disclosure of any information derived from proposals submitted by competing proposers.

All Proposers are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the Proposer due to lack of information or understanding of the proposal requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a proposal or supply under the contract. The RFP does not commit CUC to award a contract, to pay any cost incurred in the preparation of the proposal under this request, or to procure or contract for services. The Proposers are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed as per the CUC Procurement Regulations.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered prospective proposers and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on December 22, 2020** to Manny Sablan, CUC's Purchasing Administrator via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Richard Cano, CUC's Power Generation Manager via email richard.cano@cucgov.org and Christie L. Sablan, CUC's Senior Administrative Technician via email address christie.sablan@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all proposals for any reason and to waive any defects in said proposal, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All proposals shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY BOYER SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
Office of the Executive Director

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-20-007

FINA SISU WATERLINE REPLACEMENT (W16-051)

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the Construction of Fina Sisu Waterline Replacement in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. The project consists, in general installation of a new main waterline and lateral service line; connection to the existing waterline; relocation of water meters from private property to right-of-way, installation of gate valve assembly, flush hydrants, fire hydrants, air release valves, existing laterals service tap relocation to new main waterline, restoration of existing asphalt concrete road, restoration of existing concrete slab on grade; and other related work. The work shall be done in accordance with the Project Plans and Specifications and without disruption to the daily operation of the water system.

This project is funded by a grant from the United Sates of Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of the approval for project award from USEPA.

CUC requires the Project to be completed in **365 calendar days** from date of award of contract.

Prospective Bidders for this IFB must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $200.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by a Site Visit is scheduled on **December 28, 2020 at 10:00 AM (ChST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No.17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked **"CUC-IFB-20-007s, Fina Sisu Water Line Replacement"**, to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on January 14, 2021**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement the form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. **Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.**

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

Bids shall be accompanied by a bid guarantee of not less than fifteen percent (15%) of the amount of the bid. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General.

A *Payment Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent and a *Performance Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bids in anticipation of a contract. Bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

All questions or request for clarification regarding this project must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on January 4, 2021** to Mr. Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Mr. Dennis Formalejo, CUC Water/Wastewater Engineer via email dennis.formalejo@cucgov.org and Ms. Chrisite L. Sablan, CUC's Senior Administrative Technician via email christie.sablan@cucgov.org .

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any non-material imperfection in the bid proposal in the best interest of the government. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Environment

Twenty volunteers gathered at the American Memorial Park early morning Saturday, Dec. 19, to take part in the annual Christmas Bird Count.
IVA MAURIN

Volunteer Heidi Yelin spotting birds early morning last Saturday, Dec. 19, at the Outer Cove Marina, for the 2020 Christmas Bird Count. The group of 20 volunteers, led by Division of Fish and Wildlife biologist Emilie Kohler, counted 45 different species and over 1,700 individual birds during their full day of birding on Saipan.
IVA MAURIN

Volunteer J.D. Herndawn spotting birds early morning Saturday, Dec. 19, at the Outer Cove Marina, for the 2020 Christmas Bird Count.
IVA MAURIN

Counting birds at the Bird Island Overlook Saturday, Dec. 19, for the 2020 Christmas Bird Count.
IVA MAURIN

Volunteer Andrei spotting birds early morning Saturday, Dec. 19, at the Tanapag mud flats, for the 2020 Christmas Bird Count.
IVA MAURIN

ALL ABOUT BIRDS

The 2020 Christmas BIRD COUNT

By IVA MAURIN
iva_maurin@saipantribune.com
CORRESPONDENT

Last Saturday, Dec. 19, a group of about 20 volunteers congregated early morning at the American Memorial Park, armed with binoculars and scopes, to spot birds around the island, as the CNMI took part in the Christmas Bird Count led yearly by non-profit environmental organization, the Audubon Society.

Overseeing the bird count for years here in the Marianas is the Division of Fish and Wildlife of the Department of Lands and Natural Resources.

Saipan Tribune was able to join the Bird Count this year for a couple of hours, where we managed to have an interview with wildlife biologist Emilie Kohler, who led the volunteers.

"Audubon's Christmas Bird Count is one of the longest running community science programs—over 120 years," Kohler said.

> » 'We saw 45 different species and over 1,700 individual birds'

"It is a unique opportunity for people in the CNMI to contribute data to a long-term study that helps monitor the health and status of bird populations all over the world. It is also a great way for people in the community to learn how to identify birds in the Mariana Islands by sight and song."

The first Christmas Bird Count occurred on Dec. 25, 1900 at 25 locations in North America. In 2019, a total of 81,601 people participated in 2,646 Christmas Bird Counts across the world. It is a fun event designed for new and experienced birdwatchers alike.

Counting birds

The goal of the Christmas Bird Count is to count as many individual birds and as many different species as possible in a single day within a specific location—or, what is called the "count area."

Around Christmas time, migratory birds have already stopped their migrations and are settled on their wintering grounds, where, therefore, the Christmas Bird Count serves as a winter bird population census.

"The Christmas Bird Count raises awareness about avian biodiversity in the CNMI. I think most people would be surprised to learn the CNMI is home to 12 endemic bird species (species only found in the CNMI) and that over 20 species of migratory birds stopover in the CNMI every winter. We live in a very special place and the Christmas Bird Count is a way to celebrate our natural heritage," Kohler explained.

The wildlife biologist shared that 20 community members volunteered for the Saipan count on Saturday. They were split up into four teams, each team heading to a different section of the island.

"We covered biodiversity hot spots all around the island. For example, the native limestone forest habitat in Marpi is a great place to see all our native forest birds and you can see a variety of migratory shore birds and wading birds foraging on the mudflats around the Eloy S. Inos Peace Park."

Susupe Lake is a great place to see wintering migratory ducks and a colony of nesting Black Noddies. One can see many migratory shore birds along the open grounds, runways and taxiways at the Francisco C. Ada-Saipan International Airport. American Memorial Park is a great place to see a variety of bird species in wetland and shoreline habitats.

Volunteers JD Herndawn, Heidi Yelin, and Larry Maurin spotting birds early morning Saturday, Dec. 19, at the Outer Cove Marina, for the 2020 Christmas Bird Count.
EMILIE KOHLER

Volunteers also conducted the Christmas Bird Count on Rota last Sunday, Dec. 20, and the Tinian Christmas Bird Count will be occurring this week.

Rare bird sightings

Birds staying on the island to winter start to migrate come spring or fall, and the Christmas Bird Count—held toward the end of December to the beginning of January—makes it possible to see and identify reoccurring or new bird species.

"We saw 45 different species and over 1,700 individual birds. We had a rare sighting of some migratory species like a Eurasian Kestrel, a Lesser Sand Plover, and Black-naped Terns. We also saw endangered non-migratory species like the Saipan Reed-warbler (Gaga karisu), the Mariana Common Moorhen (Pulatatt), and the Mariana Swiftlet (Chachaguak)."

Aside from these rare migratory bird sightings, the volunteers also identified many common native birds including the Micronesian Myzomela (Egigi), Mariana Fruit Dove (Tottot), Micronesian Starling (Soli), and Bridled White-eye (Nosa).

Last year, all 15 Christmas Bird Count volunteers on Saipan counted 48 species, totaling 2,343 birds.

"The Christmas Bird Count is not the only program used to monitor bird populations in the CNMI. The Division of Fish and Wildlife conducts its own annual surveys, funded by the [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's] Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program," Kohler added.

"These long-term studies guide wildlife management decisions and conservation efforts. If people are interested in learning more about birds in the CNMI, they can contact the Division of Fish and Wildlife for more information and resources."

To learn more about birds on island, contact Kohler at kohler.dfw@gmail.com or at (670) 664-6032.

Life & Style

Confrontation of Black teen at NYC hotel under investigation

NEW YORK (AP)—A confrontation in which a man said a woman tackled his 14-year-old Black son in a New York City hotel lobby as she falsely accused the teen of stealing her phone is under investigation, city prosecutors said Monday.

Keyon Harrold, a prominent jazz trumpeter, posted a widely viewed video of the confrontation Saturday at the Arlo Hotel. He said the unidentified woman scratched him and tackled and grabbed his son, Keyon Harrold Jr., at the lower Manhattan hotel where the pair were staying.

"He's the sweetest, most genuine kid you could ask for," Harrold said in an interview Monday evening. "I was just appalled at how he was treated."

The video shows an agitated woman demanding her phone be returned while a hotel manager tries to settle the situation. At one point, the woman appears to rush forward and says, "I'm not letting him walk away with my phone!"

Harrold said the phone was returned by an Uber driver shortly afterward.

The confrontation prompted comparisons to recent incidents involving false accusations against Black people.

A white woman was charged with filing a false report for calling 911 and saying she was being threatened by "an African American man" during a dispute with a Black man in New York's Central Park in May. That case inspired New York state lawmakers in June to pass a law that makes it easier under civil rights law to sue an individual who calls a police officer on someone "without reason" because of their background, including race and national origin.

"There are thousands of Black men sitting in prison who have been falsely accused," Harrold said. "That's why we have to address incidents like this now, before they become life altering, life impacting issues that negatively and devastatingly affect Black people."

The parents of Keyon Harrold Jr. and civil rights attorney Ben Crump issued a statement Monday, calling on the Manhattan district attorney to bring assault and battery charges against the woman "to send the message that hateful, racially motivated behavior is unacceptable."

"As this year of racial awareness is drawing to a close, it's deeply troubling that incidents like this one, in which a Black child is viewed as and treated like a criminal, continue to happen," read the statement.

Crump and the Harrold family also called for a civil rights investigation into the Arlo Hotel "for its implicit bias" in its treatment of the teen.

Meghan and Harry end their eventful 2020 with first podcast

LOS ANGELES (AP)—The Duke and Duchess of Sussex have dropped their first podcast.

Prince Harry and Meghan Markle and guests from Elton John to their son, Archie, appear on the royal couple's first audio release Tuesday for Spotify, a 34-minute special featuring reflections on 2020.

The couple who stepped down from their royal duties in spring invited friends and people they admire to record audio diaries that were excerpted for the show.

"It's been a year, and we really we want to honor the compassion and kindness that has helped so many people get through it," the Duke of Sussex says to introduce the podcast.

"And, at the same time, to honor those who've experienced uncertainty and unthinkable loss," the Duchess of Sussex adds.

John, 73, was among the many musical artists who was in the middle of a tour when the pandemic struck. "All of the sudden we ground to a halt," he says in his audio diary.

Other contributors include tennis player Naomi Osaka, who won the U.S. Open in 2020 and calls it "the year that I became more grateful for the things and the people around me."

Stacey Abrams, whose push for voter registration helped put Georgia at the political center of the United States, calls 2020 a year that "saw horror and meanness surge, and justice fight back."

Despite the coronavirus pandemic dominating headlines, Meghan and Harry managed to make major news at the end of March when they stepped down from their royal duties and soon moved to California, settling in the coastal community of Montecito.

Tuesday's podcast is their first under a multi-year deal between their production company Archewell Audio and Spotify.

With some coaching from his parents, 1-year old Archie ends the podcast with a "Happy new year!"

French designer Pierre Cardin, licensing pioneer, dies at 98

PARIS (AP)—French fashion designer Pierre Cardin possessed a wildly inventive artistic sensibility tempered by a stiff dose of business sense. He had no problem acknowledging that he earned more from a pair of stockings than from a haute-couture gown with a six-figure price tag.

Cardin, who died Tuesday at age 98, was the ultimate entrepreneurial designer. He understood the importance his exclusive haute couture shows played in stoking consumer desire and became an early pioneer of licensing. His name emblazoned hundreds of products, from accessories to home goods.

Cardin

"The numbers don't lie," Cardin said in a 1970 French television interview. "I earn more from the sale of a necktie than from the sale of a million-franc dress. It's counter-intuitive, but the accounts prove it. In the end, it's all about the numbers."

The French Academy of Fine Arts announced Cardin's death in a tweet. He had been among its illustrious members since 1992. The academy did not give a cause of death or say where the designer died.

Designer Jean-Paul Gaultier, who made his debut in Cardin's maison, paid tribute to his mentor on Twitter: "Thank you Mister Cardin to have opened for me the doors of fashion and made my dream possible."

Along with fellow Frenchman Andre Courreges and Spain's Paco Rabanne, two other Paris-based designers known for their avant-garde Space Age styles, Cardin revolutionized fashion starting in the early 1950s.

At a time when other Paris labels were obsessed with flattering the female form, Cardin's designs cast the wearer as a sort of glorified hanger, there to showcase the sharp shapes and graphic patterns of the clothes. Created for neither pragmatists nor wallflowers, his designs were all about making a big entrance—sometimes very literally.

Gowns and bodysuits in fluorescent spandex were fitted with plastic hoops that stood away from the body at the waist, elbows, wrists and knees. Bubble dresses and capes enveloped their wearers in oversized spheres of fabric. Toques were shaped like flying saucers; bucket hats sheathed the models' entire head, with cutout windshields at the eyes.

Diddy providing some COVID-19 relief for Miami neighborhood

MIAMI (AP)—Rapper Sean "Diddy" Combs provided some coronavirus relief in a Miami neighborhood on Tuesday, handing out $50 bills amid a crowd of hundreds.

He was joined by his children at the event set up to help Overtown neighborhood residents facing economic hardship during the pandemic.

In addition to the cash, $50 Publix supermarket gift cards and bags containing hygiene products also were handed out.

Diddy's charitable foundation is also working with music festival and nightlife organizer Michael Gardner and the local group Teens Exercising Extraordinary Success to provide rental assistance for 175 families.

Diddy wore a clear face shield and black gloves as he worked his way through the crowd, greeting fans and families.

Jealousy creates a barrier between biological siblings

DEAR ABBY: I'm an American man who was adopted as an infant. Several years ago, I found my birth parents. They are not from America. My mother came here to give birth and left. Sometime later she married my father and had more children. I'm in touch with the entire family, but mainly my birth parents.

My biological siblings are jealous of my success in life and make it plain they don't approve of much that I do. They also make sure I know I'm not REALLY part of the family because we didn't grow up together (although we are, by blood, 100% siblings).

I deal with this the best I can, but now I'm getting flak from them because of my political views. (They saw a photo of me at a political fundraiser.) When my sister turned 40 this year, I sent her a card, a Facebook post and a text message. I turned 50 at the same time and heard not a word from her.

Although my siblings are not Americans, they feel the need to trash our country, our government and our way of life. I'm tempted to cut ties with them. There is little respect coming my way, and I think I've had enough. I value your opinion, which is why I am writing to you now.

BTW: I had an amazing set of (now deceased) parents and wonderful siblings growing up. I just wish I had a better relationship with my biological family.

DISAPPOINTED AND EXCLUDED

DEAR DISAPPOINTED: Your family is the family that raised and nurtured you. I, too, am sorry you don't have a better relationship with these jealous, judgmental people. You are related by blood – nothing more. They do not have the right to criticize your political views or your lifestyle, any more than you have the right to criticize theirs. (And I doubt you would.) Because you are neither respected nor included, you have every right to back off and head in a different, more positive direction. Frankly, I suspect you will feel better as soon as you do.

DEAR ABBY: I'm a 26-year-old male in a long-distance relationship with my girlfriend, who is 18. I love her to the moon and back, but I feel like she only stays with me because I can buy her things. She gets upset with me when I don't get them for her. She says I value my mother and others before her.

I love her so much, and I want to marry her. I'm a minister at a church. She thinks she should take priority before my bills and taking care of my mother, who can barely walk. What do I do?

UNEASY IN NEW JERSEY

DEAR UNEASY: From what you have written, it appears you are involved with an 18-year-old self-involved gold digger who does seem to be with you only because of what you give her. She hasn't yet learned (1) That a gift should be voluntary and appreciated, rather than extorted, and (2) the way a man treats his mother is the way he will treat his wife.

Since you asked my advice, here it is: Close your wallet and ditch this "girl."

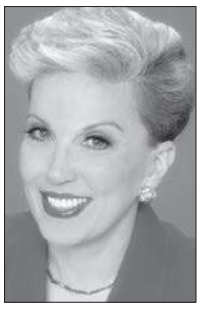
DEAR READERS: Well, 2020, a year like no other in recent memory, has drawn to a close! I join you tonight in toasting a 2021 that will be less challenging for all of us. If you're celebrating this evening, please take measures to protect your health and the safety of others.

LOVE, ABBY

What teens need to know about sex, drugs, AIDS and getting along with peers and parents is in "What Every Teen Should Know." Send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Teen Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

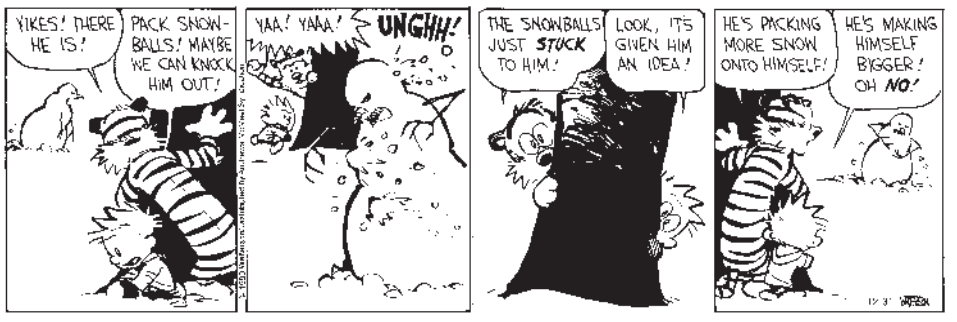


Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson


YIKES! THERE HE IS!
PACK SNOWBALLS! MAYBE WE CAN KNOCK HIM OUT!
YAA! YAAA!
UNGHH!
THE SNOWBALLS JUST STUCK TO HIM!
LOOK, IT'S GIVEN HIM AN IDEA!
HE'S PACKING MORE SNOW ONTO HIMSELF!
HE'S MAKING HIMSELF BIGGER! OH NO!

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

DO WE HAVE ANYTHING EXCITING PLANNED FOR TONIGHT?
UH. YEAH!
WE'RE RINGING IN A NEW YEAR! THINK ABOUT THAT!
A BRAND-NEW YEAR FULL OF PROMISE AND POSSIBILITIES!
I MEANT, LIKE, PIGS IN A BLANKET. OR A DIP.
THINK BIGGER. THE WORLD IS OUR OYSTER.
NO OYSTERS!

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

HI, MILLIE — WOULD YOU LIKE TO GO OUT TONIGHT AND RING IN THE NEW YEAR WITH ME?
WELL, YEAH, TRADITIONALLY COUPLES SHARE A KISS WHEN THE CLOCK STRIKES MIDNIGHT.
SHE SAID SHE'D RATHER STAY IN 2020.

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

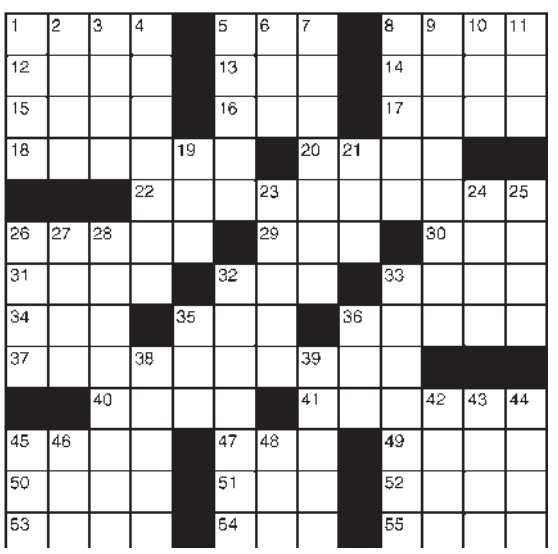
ACROSS
1 Coated with gold
5 Snip
8 Norway's capital
12 Modern taxi rival
13 Kiev's land (Abbr.)
14 GPS suggestions
15 "Smallville" girl
16 Irish actor Stephen
17 Highway division
18 Russian newspaper
20 Toad's kin
22 Final chapter, historically
26 Inventor Nikola
29 Wardrobe malfunction
30 Hr. fraction
31 LAX guesses
32 Alphabet starter
33 Designer Chanel
34 Heavy weight
35 "Do — say!"
36 Financial guru Suze
37 "That's all she wrote"
40 Drive- — window
41 Caveat word
45 Brazilian rubber
47 Goat's cry
49 Royal Norwegian name
50 Actor Epps
51 Stately tree
52 Queue
53 Carton sealer
54 Salty expanse
55 Flunk

DOWN
1 Big swig
2 Construction piece
3 Sultry Home
4 Sees the world
5 Bandage brand
6 Luau instrument
7 You might get stuck in it at rush hour
8 Acrylic fiber
9 Child star's parent, maybe
10 Cariou of "Blue Bloods"
11 Sugar suffix
19 "CSI" evidence
21 Knock
23 Planet's path
24 Costa —
25 Shortly
26 Head, to Henri
27 Thames town
28 Bunker
32 Takes on, as a role
33 Be an alarmist
35 Ghana's cont.
36 Tram load
38 Chicago airport
39 Sasha or Malia
42 Others (Lat.)
43 Hindu royal
44 Daring Knievel
45 Soup cooker
46 Docs' org.
48 Hearty brew

Solution time: 24 mins.

		F	I	T			S	C	I			
	L	O	D	I		S	T	R	O	P		
C	A	R	O	B		A	R	E	T	E	S	
R	C	U	L	E	T	T	E	T	A	B	L	E
	S	M		T	A	U	P	E		B	E	G
			C	A	R	P			A	L	P	O
		V	A	N	N	A		B	E	R	E	T
V	A	R	N				I	A	Y	S		
	L	E		S	P	I	N	E		A	A	H
P	I	N	G	P	O	N	G	T	A	B	L	E
		D	A	M	A	S	K		E	L	U	D	E
			S	A	R	I	S		S	O	S	O
				N	E	T			T	E	E	

Yesterday's answer 12-31



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955!** 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Joey McIntyre, 48; Val Kilmer, 61; Bebe Neuwirth, 62; Anthony Hopkins, 83.

Happy Birthday: Resolve pending issues, and move forward with a clean slate so you can focus on what's important to you. Reaching a place where you feel at ease to do as you please and follow a meaningful path will encourage positive change. Take the initiative and put yourself first. If you are happy, you will spread joy to those you encounter. Your numbers are 6, 19, 24, 27, 31, 34, 48.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* Using emotional tactics will fuel the fire. Be reasonable, and problem-solving will be within reach. Concentrate on being better, not trying to change others. Choose a path that will lead to your happiness. Make peace, love and romance priorities. ✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* Make adjustments at home or to the way you handle your professional affairs. Give others the chance to voice opinions. It may change your mind as well as improve your relationships. Arguing isn't the solution; diplomacy will be necessary. ✪✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* Get along with friends, relatives and peers. At the first sign of trouble, take a step back and evaluate your next move. Don't trust someone offering false information. Do your due diligence before you commit to anything. Focus on personal improvement. ✪✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* Avoid spending unnecessarily. A bargain is only useful if you need the product you are purchasing. Don't believe all the hype about something that sounds too good to be real. Don't add to your angst; concentrate on diminishing stress. ✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* Refuse to let the little things get to you. Focus on love, self-improvement and preparing yourself for the best year ever. Opportunities are heading your way, but how successful you are will depend on your ability to make things happen. ✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* Reach out to someone from your past. Catching up will help you put your life in perspective and believe in yourself. Put an end to whatever isn't working for you, and start the new year on a positive note. ✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Spend time with the ones you love. Put plans for the new year in place, and the changes you want to make to your living arrangements will fall into place. Make love, romance and keeping the peace your priorities. ✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* A new year, a fresh start. Don't let uncertainty hold you back or unfinished business stand in your way. Embrace new beginnings, and make a decision that will impact your life. Don't linger when the time is ripe for change. ✪✪✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* Don't let temptation lead to a health risk. You can bring in the new year paying more attention to those you live with and less to those urging you to be indulgent when caution is in your best interest. ✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* You can avoid an emotional scuffle today if you challenge yourself, not others. Do something to occupy your time that will bring about a positive and productive change at home. Set yourself up for success, not failure. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* Be innovative, do your part and make your life better. Be open to change, but don't allow someone to push you in a direction that doesn't suit your needs. Life is about choices; choose to do what's best for you. ✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* Look for an opportunity that will open doors. Be original in the way you approach others, and you will command the attention and help you require to get things done. Protect against health risks and people trying to undermine you. ✪✪✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are determined, proactive and energetic. You are sensitive and protective.

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SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

		2			7		3	
			5		6	4		
			2		9	1		
		7	3					
1				8				9
					7	5		
		9	8		2			
	2	6			5			
7		8				3		

Difficulty Level ★★★ 12/31

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Last Friday's Answer

1	3	8	6	4	2	7	9	5
4	9	2	5	8	7	6	1	3
7	6	5	1	9	3	4	2	8
2	4	1	3	5	9	8	7	6
9	7	6	8	1	4	3	5	2
5	8	3	2	7	6	9	4	1
3	1	7	9	2	8	5	6	4
6	2	9	4	3	5	1	8	7
8	5	4	7	6	1	2	3	9

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

STUFFING A CHICKEN Solution: 8 letters

R	A	D	D	E	H	C	K	R	T	L	A	S	Y	B
S	E	O	C	C	S	O	E	T	S	A	T	E	R	A
G	I	I	S	E	O	E	P	E	A	S	L	E	E	C
G	R	R	R	C	H	R	E	G	O	S	A	H	L	O
E	B	M	E	E	H	T	N	H	R	D	C	I	E	N
R	T	M	Y	P	T	O	O	A	C	A	S	A	C	O
U	A	Ⓔ	A	K	P	T	P	R	N	A	V	H	I	I
T	E	I	Ⓚ	E	O	E	U	I	B	O	E	Y	L	N
X	M	A	S	Ⓐ	T	M	P	B	C	S	C	S	R	O
I	E	O	P	I	Ⓑ	S	S	A	T	I	A	R	A	O
M	E	P	T	S	N	P	D	N	U	U	E	C	G	D
F	L	M	I	A	I	O	U	J	C	D	R	G	L	L
E	R	Y	Y	C	M	T	M	E	N	E	L	K	A	E
T	T	A	E	H	E	O	P	E	A	R	S	I	E	S
A	T	S	A	O	T	R	T	M	L	L	I	F	M	Y

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Apple, Avocado, Bacon, Bake, Basil, Breadcrumbs, Brie, Broth, Butter, Celery, Cheddar, Cheese, Chestnut, Chop, Cook, Corn, Cream, Eggs, Feta, Fill, Garlic, Gravy, Heat, Juicy, Lemon, Meal, Meat, Mild, Mixture, Noodles, Onion, Parsley, Pears, Peas, Pepper, Raisin, Recipe, Rice, Roast, Sage, Salt, Sauce, Smoky, Spices, Spinach, Steam, Taste, Tender, Thyme, Toast, Tomato, Turkey

Yesterday's Answer: Particles

The NEW **Treasury 41** can be purchased online at www.WonderWordBooks.com, or call 1-800-642-6480.

Bucks set record 29 triples in romp over Heat

MIAMI (AP)—The Milwaukee Bucks made an NBA-record 29 3-pointers in their 144-97 romp over the Eastern Conference champion Miami Heat on Tuesday night.

Milwaukee shot 29 for 51 from beyond the arc, two nights after going 7 for 38 in a loss to New York.

The Bucks used 13 players and 12 made at least one 3—two-time reigning MVP Giannis Antetokounmpo was the only one who didn't. Khris Middleton had four 3s and scored 25 points, Jrue Holiday made six during his 24-point effort and Donte DiVincenzo was 5 for 6 from deep to finish with 17 points.

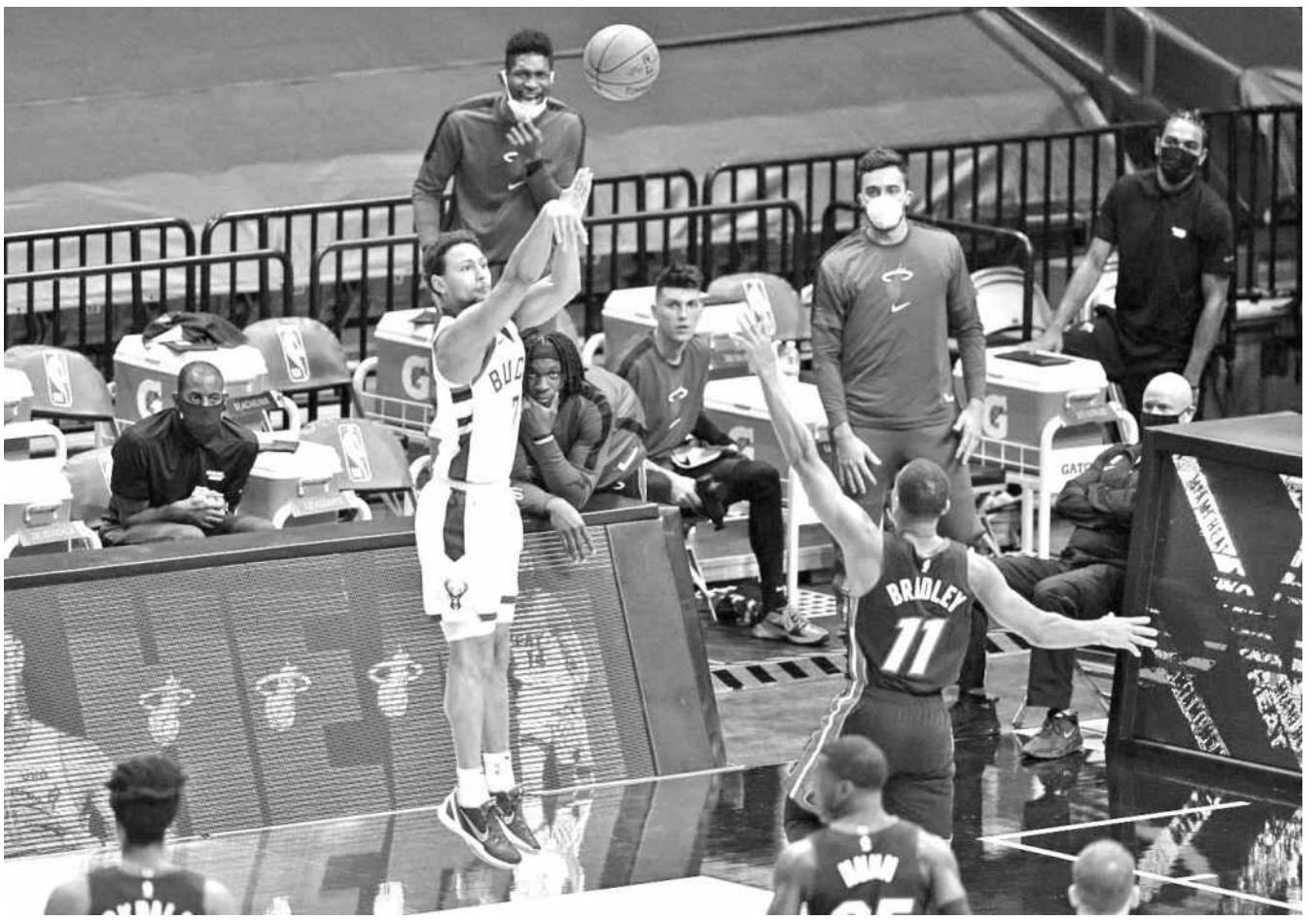
Antetokounmpo had only nine points.

The record-breaking shot was made by Sam Merrill, who got the 28th 3-pointer with 6:07 remaining, giving the Bucks a 131-86 lead.

The previous record for 3s in a game was 27, set by Houston against Phoenix on April 7, 2019.

Tyler Herro scored 23 points for the Heat. Jimmy Butler missed the game with a sprained right ankle.

It was the biggest road win in Bucks history, and it matched the second-worst loss in Heat history.



AP
Milwaukee Bucks guard Bryn Forbes (7) attempts a 3-point basket as Miami Heat guard Avery Bradley (11) defends during the first half of an NBA game Tuesday, Dec. 29, 2020, in Miami.

76ers 100, Raptors 93

Joel Embiid had 29 points, 16 rebounds and one scare when he briefly left the game with an injury, leading Philadelphia past winless Toronto.

Embiid had Philadelphia holding its breath when the big man left with some sort of leg injury. He went down early in the third quarter and grabbed the back of his lower right leg as he stood up. Embiid, who missed Sunday's loss against Cleveland with back stiffness, walked gingerly to the locker room.

The All-Star center returned a few minutes later and checked back in the game with the Sixers down 11. He sank 14 of 16 free throws.

Clippers 124, Timberwolves 101

Lou Williams led seven Clippers in double figures with 20 points and Los Angeles routed Minnesota in a game missing stars for both teams.

The Clippers bounced back from a 51-point shellacking against Dallas two days earlier despite playing without Kawhi Leonard for the second straight game because of a mouth laceration. Minnesota big man Karl-Anthony Towns sat out with a dislocated left wrist.

Celtics 116, Pacers 111

Jayson Tatum scored 27 points and Boston rallied from 17 down in the third quarter to beat Indiana.

Jaylen Brown had 20 points for the Celtics, who outscored the Pacers 33-18 in the final period.

Indiana led 88-71 in the third and was still ahead by 11 entering the fourth, when Tatum scored 14 points and the Celtics surged to a 109-100 lead.

Bulls 115, Wizards 107

Zach LaVine scored 23 points, including nine straight in the third quarter, and Coby White added 18 to lead Chicago past winless Washington for its first victory of the season.

The Bulls improved to 1-4 while the Wizards fell to 0-4, their worst start since beginning the 2012-13 season with 12 straight losses.

Russell Westbrook had his third straight triple-double with 21 points, 15 rebounds and 11 assists for Washington.

Knicks 95, Cavaliers 86

Julius Randle had 28 points, 12 rebounds and 11 assists for his first triple-double in two years, leading New York over Cleveland.

Randle, who scored 18 in the first half as the Knicks built a 16-point lead, completed his seventh career triple-double with an assist on Elfrid Payton's 3-pointer in the fourth quarter. It was the power forward's first triple-double since Nov. 19, 2018, with New Orleans.

Warriors 116, Pistons 106

Stephen Curry scored 31 points and Andrew Wiggins added 27 to lift Golden State over winless Detroit.

The injury-plagued Warriors have won two in a row after dropping their first two games by a combined 65 points. The decisive stretch Tuesday came with Curry on the bench. Rookie big man James Wiseman had a dunk and Wiggins followed with a 3-pointer to cap a 12-0 run that put Golden State up 98-89 in the fourth quarter.

Magic 118, Thunder 107

Nikola Vucevic had a season-high 28 points and 10 rebounds as unbeaten Orlando topped Oklahoma City.

The Magic, who are 4-0 for the first time in the franchise's 31-season history, are one of only two undefeated teams in the NBA, along with Atlanta. They started 3-0 just three previous times before this season.

Suns 111, Pelicans 86

Jae Crowder scored a season-high 21 points, Cameron Johnson added 18 and Phoenix rolled to a lopsided win over New Orleans.

The game was billed as an intriguing matchup between two of the NBA's rising teams but the Suns broke it open by outscoring the Pelicans 35-15 in the second quarter to take a 66-44 advantage into the break.

Kings 125, Nuggets 115

Tyrese Haliburton scored eight of his 13 points in the fourth quarter as Sacramento pulled away to beat Denver, spoiling a record-setting night for Nuggets big man Nikola Jokic.

The 12th pick in this year's draft, Haliburton made several sleek plays and gave the Kings a needed lift down the stretch. Sacramento's rookie guard hit two of his three 3-pointers in the final 9½ minutes and added a steal and fast-break layup during an 11-0 run that put the Kings ahead 120-108.

From Kobe to Maradona, a year of staggering losses in sports

A tribute mural in memory of Kobe and Gianna Bryant is seen on September 25, 2020 in Brooklyn, New York City. AP

LOS ANGELES (AP)—There were so many this year.

Sports in 2020 was an unending state of mourning. It was as if every week, sometimes days, another luminary fell, bringing a cascade of condolence and remembrance.

It began New Year's Day, a harbinger of what the year held, with the deaths of David Stern and Don Larsen. Not long after came a seismic jolt, the helicopter crash of Kobe Bryant in the fog-shrouded California hills that reverberated across sports and across continents.

Deep into the year, a bookend to Bryant, Diego Maradona died from a heart attack in Argentina weeks after brain surgery, the waves of grief rippling across soccer. It seemed a whole wing of the Baseball Hall of Fame was ripped away—Al Kaline, Tom Seaver, Lou Brock, Bob Gibson, Whitey Ford, Joe Morgan, Phil Niekro. Football lost a big piece of its heart: Don Shula, Gale Sayers, Paul Hornung, Bobby Mitchell. Gone from college basketball was John Thompson, as imposing and important a coach as any.

The losses, of course, came against a backdrop of a pandemic, its number of fatalities rolled out daily on TV screens. Sports took its place in the grim procession, even if COVID-19 was not listed on the death certificate. For fans of a certain age, it was as if the lights dimmed on a generation of players who long illuminated the game.

What was left were snapshots and YouTube montages and endless conversations—the soaring move to the basket, the steely command on the mound, the slashing run past tacklers, the burst of an impossible goal. It's all a fan could ask for.

Bryant was among nine who died that January day, including 13-year-old daughter Gianna. He was 41, less than four years removed from the NBA, and on his way to a youth tournament. Bryant is the game's fourth-leading scorer. He spent 20 years with the Los Angeles Lakers, 18 as an All-Star, and won five titles. He was a generational player who left an imprint with his swoops and scores, his touch and grit. Purple and gold became colors of mourning. "It doesn't make no sense," the Lakers' LeBron James said. "But the universe just puts things in your life."

Maradona was the soul of Argentine soccer whose magic extended to Italy, where he bewitched Napoli fans. He carried Argentina to the 1986 World Cup title, his two goals in a quarterfinal against England among soccer's greatest: the "Hand of God" goal—he later acknowledged it came with his hand, not head—and another in which he shredded an entire defense. He died at 60, his health undercut by cocaine and obesity. One commentator in Argentina likened him to the "great masters of music and painting."

Kaline spent 22 years with the Detroit Tigers, elegantly covering right field and in 1955 hitting .340 at age 20 to become the youngest player to win the American League batting title. He was simply Mr. Tiger. In Cincinnati, Morgan, his elbow twitching at the plate like the wing of an agitated chicken, was a maestro at second base, a two-time MVP and vital part of the Big Red Machine before becoming a TV voice of the game.

Ford was the dependable "Chairman of the Board," a left-hander who played on six title winners and might have been the greatest starting pitcher in New York Yankees history. In St. Louis, Gibson struck palpable fear into batters. He won seven straight World Series starts and in 1968 had a 1.12 ERA. Baseball responded by lowering the mound the next year. A month earlier, Cardinals fans also grieved for Brock, who came over from the Cubs and became one of the game's great leadoff hitters and base stealers.

Three days earlier, it was Seaver. He was "Tom Terrific" and "The Franchise," both nicknames apt. Seaver shook the mindset of the New York Mets. He was a three-time Cy Young Award winner and cornerstone of a team he transformed from woebegone to World Series champion in 1969. Niekro won 318 games and pitched until he was 48, his knuckleball dancing and mystifying batters across the decades.

Larsen was 81-91 over 14 big league seasons, but on one October day in 1956 the gods of the game visited an Everyman. The Yankees pitcher did what no one in baseball ever had—throw a perfect game in the World Series.

NFL has pulled off improbable task of playing amid pandemic

NEW YORK (AP)—It took playing games on all seven days of the week, a wide receiver starting at quarterback, numerous schedule changes and constant revisions to health and safety protocols for the NFL to reach Week 17 on time.

That's a remarkable accomplishment during a pandemic.

"Since March, the league, clubs, coaches, Players Association committed to a tremendous medically led collaborative effort to create a safe work environment that maintained a level of acceptable equity," NFL executive vice president of football operations Troy Vincent told The Associated Press on Monday. "Protocols were diligently developed and modified based on virus identification, isolation, containment that allowed the flexibility to adjust schedules when necessary, while at the same time affording clubs and players autonomy in a non-bubble environment. These efforts, still ongoing, by all the stakeholders demonstrates the power of teamwork and sacrifice to achieve a season in unprecedented times."

COVID-19 wiped out spring practices, canceled the preseason and took 2020 into uncharted territory, but it didn't stop the NFL from conducting business under the most unusual circumstances.

The league presses forward with its goal of playing all 256 scheduled games in 17 weeks and the Super Bowl in Tampa, Florida, on Feb. 7. What often seemed improbable has become quite achievable.

"Contact tracing is the thing people are not talking the most about, but it is foundational to our success," said Dr. Allen Sills, the league's chief medical officer. "We have said all along it is almost impossible to prevent single, isolated cases. Our entire protocol and strategy has been built around mitigating transmission—and the key is good contact tracing."

The NFL implemented strict COVID-19 protocols that were updated throughout the season as more information regarding the virus and controlling it was learned. Players and coaches were tested daily, mask usage became mandatory, facilities were shut down at various points, meetings were held virtually and the games continued.

Contact tracers became the MVPs. The process is extensive and starts with determining who was exposed to someone who tested positive, the level of exposure and level of risk and how to mitigate risk.

"I almost think of it as almost like blocking and tackling," Sills said. "Players can make the long runs and great catches, but we all know without outstanding blocking it's not possible to execute those plays. That process has to me been really foundational, and a tremendous amount of work is involved with a very large number of people. It's more than the (tracking) devices; they are important but not the sum total of our contact tracing. What's involved is interviewing individuals, gathering all that data from the tracking devices, and watching the video from team facilities and practice fields, talking to an individual's friends and family and others who may be involved."

Each team has an infectious disease control officer who works along with the head athletic trainer and team physician. The trio works with the league's three-member team consisting of a contact tracer, an epidemiologist and a physician.

"They will get all the data, synthesize it all and work with the club's personnel, and then prepare a report, which they will bring back to our committee that oversees our day-to-day COVID operations, and then I will review that report," Sills said. "So it is multilayered, with staff and many other people. On some days we might have only two to three traces and some days have 14 to 15 going on."

The Tennessee Titans were the first team to experience a breakout and the Baltimore Ravens were hit hard last month, forcing them to play the league's second Wednesday game since 1949.

Several coaches were fined for violating the mask-wearing mandate, five teams were fined for multiple protocol violations and the Las Vegas Raiders and New Orleans Saints were stripped of draft choices.

The Denver Broncos ended up using practice squad wideout Kendall Hinton at quarterback in a loss to New Orleans after No. 3 QB Jeff Driskel tested positive for the coronavirus and starter Drew Lock, backup Brett Rypien and practice squad veteran Blake Bortles had failed to wear their masks around one another earlier that week.

Hinton, who played quarterback at Wake Forest before switching to wide receiver, became the first non-QB to start at the position since running back Tom Matte did so for the Baltimore Colts in 1965.

Pacific Mini Games moved to 2022

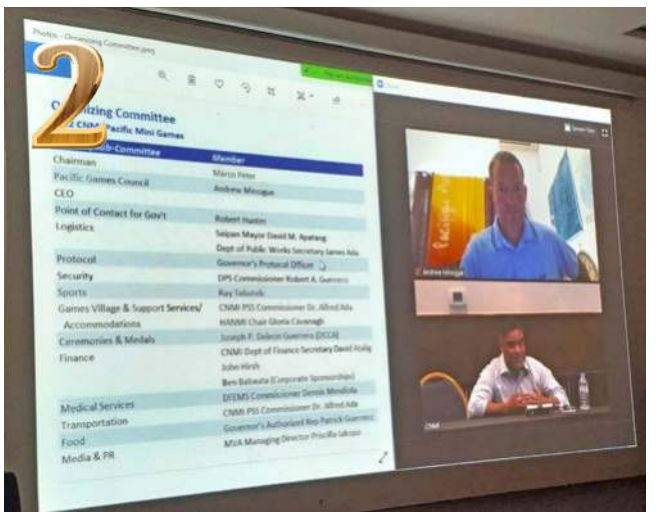
Nearly a month after the CNMI government reaffirmed its commitment for the Commonwealth's hosting of the Pacific Mini Games, the COVID-19 pandemic hit the islands, bringing uncertainties to the fate of the regional competition.

Saipan is supposed to host the Mini Games next year and with the CNMI focusing its resources and attention to combating the spread of the pandemic, thoughts on having quadrennial event scrapped or postponed circulated around the Pacific region.

The host nation chose the latter, as the CNMI government and the Northern Marianas Sports Association announced last October the new dates for the Mini Games, which will now be held from June 17 to 25 in 2022.

NMSA has also requested to the Pacific Games Council and Pacific Games Association the inclusion of tennis and weightlifting to the Mini Games program.

With the new schedule secured, the Commonwealth continued to move forward with its preparations for the Mini Games hosting by forming the 2022 Pacific Mini Games Organizing Committee. Rep. Marco Peter (R-Saipan) is the committee's chair and will be joined on the group by representatives from both the public and private sectors.



ROSELYN B. MONROYO

2022 Pacific Mini Games Organizing Committee chair Rep. Marco Peter (R-Saipan), bottom screen shot, talks to Pacific Games Council chief executive officer Andrew Minogue during the virtual Northern Mariana Sports Association General Assembly last month at the Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan.

MRA returns home

The Marianas Racing Association has successfully revived motocross in the CNMI this year, paving its way back to its old home.

The Marianas Motocross Park was signed over to MRA in October after months working with the Department of Public Lands, the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs, the Attorney General's Office, and the Office of the Governor. The facility is now being built exactly at the same location where the former CowTown Raceway is at, allowing the NMI motocross family to return to its old turf after more than a decade.

Before getting back to CowTown, MRA has held practice and regular races at the Kan Pacific grounds for months to draw back interest in the sport. As of this writing, MRA has nearly 200 members—more than doubling the membership since the group was formed late last year—and it hopes to welcome more next year when they host competitions at the Marianas Motocross Park.

With completion of the new raceway slated early next year, MRA will still hold some of its races at the temporary course across the Mariana Resort & Spa and will also regularly utilize CowTown to familiarize its rider with the more challenging course.

JOSEPH CHIN

Marianas Racing Association riders navigate the course at the former CowTown Raceway last Sunday.

NMSA under new leadership

Change in leadership marked the start of 2020 for Northern Marianas Sports Association.

Northern Mariana Islands Football Association president Jerry Tan was elected to the NMSA board and was later voted as its head. Joining Tan on the NMSA board are vice president Ramon Tebuteb of the Northern Mariana Islands Athletics, secretary Val Hofchneider of the NMI Paddling Sports Federation, treasurer John Hirsh of the NMI Swimming Federation and directors Laurie Peterka, James Lee, and Lia Rangamar.

With the new leadership in place, NMSA has been working on continuing the projects former president Mike White and executive director Tony Rogolifoi have started. These includes the repair and improvement projects at the Oleai Sports Complex after federal grants were approved for the facilities that sustained significant damage from super typhoons Soudelor and Yutu.

Though the process to proceed with the project has been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, NMSA has started working on minor improvements at the main sports hub on the island, clearing the weights room, repainting the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium, and fixing its office and restrooms. Lights have been installed with the help of the grant secured by the Saipan Mayor's Office, while parking lots have been cleared for the safety of the public.

More challenges await NMSA, especially in the next two years, as it works with the CNMI government, the 2022 Pacific Mini Games Organizing Committee, its member federations, and the community for the hosting of the quadrennial competition.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Northern Marianas Sports Association president Jerry Tan, third left, poses with NMSA board members, other participants in the strategic planning workshop, and FISU Oceania secretary general Donna Spethman, who virtually facilitated the event held at the Hyatt Regency Ballroom last September.

NMI

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will continue to receive financial and technical assistance from the confederation. This means more competitions and skill-development opportunities for national players, coaches, and officials; increase in number of facilities and improvement of the present ones; and further strengthening of NMIFA's grassroots, interscholastic, youth, women's, men's, and club programs.

After being granted full membership status, NMIFA vows to work harder as it continues its journey and eye its next destination—FIFA membership. Admittance into the world government body of football is every federation's dream and NMIFA hopes it will take them shorter than 12 years to reach that goal. "When we become a FIFA member, it will be great to see our CNMI national team compete in the World Cup qualifier. Someday, we hope to fulfill that dream," NMIFA president Jerry Tan said after the NMIFA was granted full membership by the AFC.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Gov. Ralph DLG Torres, left, congratulates NMIFA and its president Jerry Tan for reaching a milestone this year.

Canceled competitions, virtual events

With the COVID-19 pandemic began crippling the CNMI starting in March, majority of the sports competitions in the Commonwealth were either canceled or postponed.

After the Saipan Marathon in March, the Tagaman Triathlon, Marianas Cup, All Schools Track and Field Championships, CNMI Junior Tennis Championships, Northern Marianas ITF Junior Championships, Saipan Little League Baseball, and other annual events on island were scrapped from the 2020 calendar.

Despite these cancellations, the ever-active sports community found a way to go ahead with their favorite activities with the emergence of virtual events.

Runners/walkers were the busiest ones at this time of pandemic, as they joined virtual races (including duathlons) one after another. They "raced" in the Run The Marianas, Guam's Go The Distance Challenge, Guam National Virtual Triathlon/Duathlon, Turkey Trot Run, Life in the Son Go the Xtra Mile Virtual Run/Walk Challenge, JP Hero Run, and a lot more.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

The "king" of virtual races on Saipan Edward Dela Cruz Jr. poses for a photo before his regular run at the Oleai Sports Complex track oval.

There were some events that went ahead without joining the "virtual trend," but safety protocols were observed and number of entries were limited. Northern Marianas Athletics had its interscholastic cross country season and the highly-anticipated Christmas Island Relay, while Northern Mariana Islands Cycling Federation hosted the shortened Hell of the Marianas, holding a 68-kilometer race, instead of the usual 100K.

The CNMI sports community is thankful that the islands is at Level Blue (second safest) in the vulnerability scale, as competitive and recreational athletes are still able to train and compete despite the restrictions. Athletes, coaches, and sports officials are looking forward to Level Green (safest) next year, as they prepare for the 2022 Pacific Mini Games, other signature events on island, and a few more regional competitions.

Bucks set record 29 triples in romp over Heat

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Saipan Tribune
Sports

From Kobe to Maradona, a year of staggering losses in sports

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TOP 5 STORIES OF 2020

1

NMI soccer hits milestone

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
The Northern Mariana Islands Football Association holds the AFC Women's Football Day a week before sports competitions and other related events were either suspended or canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The AFC Women's Football Day program has consistently drawn participation from hundreds of youth and adult players in the CNMI.

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Just when the year is about to end with the NMI sports community and the rest of the world still struggling to cope with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, an uplifting news came, as the Northern Mariana Islands Football Association was granted full membership status by the Asian Football Confederation.

With NMI soccer reaching yet another milestone, it is just fitting to make this achievement the top local sports story for 2020.

The NMIFA's application for ordinary membership received overwhelming support from the AFC family, as it got all affirmative votes (40) during the virtual 30th AFC Congress last Dec. 9. The NMIFA took 12 long years to earn the AFC nod and it worth the wait, as the full membership status does not only provide hope at these challenging times, but also countless opportunities for NMI soccer.

With the upgraded membership status with AFC, NMIFA

See NMI on Page 23

AFC CONGRESS 2020
Results
15.
Do you approve the admission of the Northern Mariana Islands Football Association as an Ordinary Member?
Members present 43
Members present and entitled to vote 42
Valid votes cast 40
Votes required for a simple majority 21
YES 40
NO 0
ABSTAIN 2

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Forty Asian Football Confederation members voted for granting the NMIFA ordinary membership status this year.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
NMI Men's National Team player Sebastien Manabat performs drills as his squad managed to resume training at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville amid the COVID-19 pandemic by following safety protocols.